The Whittier Union High School District will provide all students with an engaging, quality, standards-driven instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement.
WHITTIER UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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WHITTIER UNION’S CULTURE: SUPPORTING THE VISION

The Whittier Union High School District has a long history of proactively implementing programs and processes in order to provide our students with a world class education. These efforts are driven by the valuable insight and leadership of our staff who work collaboratively to lead our instructional efforts and actively participate in the decisions of our district. This Guide to Instructional Direction is the roadmap we have developed to ensure that every segment of our organization is moving in the same direction with a clear vision of expectation.

Led by our Educational Services division with support from Business and Personnel Services, all of our employees recognize the heroic efforts that need to take place in the 720 days that our students spend in high school. The alignment of our curriculum, instruction and assessment is vital to making sure that we don’t just have pockets of excellence, but in fact, have excellence in every school and in every classroom. It is only through our culture of collaboration that these efforts will flourish.

We are guided by the principle of *Whatever it Takes* and the belief that *Demographics Do Not Determine Destiny*. These are not just quotes, but the way of life in Whittier Union. Our bell schedules, use of technology, common assessments and professional learning are all driven from these deeply held mantras.

Whittier Union is dedicated to equity, access, and excellence. A quality standards-driven instructional program that is consistently delivered ensures that circumstances of birth, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, or disability are not barriers to learning. We are preparing our students for a future that will be determined not by their ethnicity or family income; but by their excelling academically in the most rigorous course of study provided by deeply committed highly qualified teachers. By working closely together and learning from one another we will continue to collectively raise the level of our work. We are focused on high achievement for all of our students and will do everything possible to narrow the achievement gap between our highest and lowest performing students, ensuring equity and excellence for all.

All our employees recognize the heroic efforts that need to take place in the 720 days that our students spend in high school ... making sure we have excellence in every school and every classroom. It is only through our culture of collaboration that these efforts flourish.
REALIZING THE VISION

The District Vision expresses our commitment to meet the educational needs of all students; our commitment to the implementation of courses aligned with State and National content standards; our commitment to provide support to our teachers, along with the expectation of continuous improvement in student academic performance. To support continued growth, Whittier Union’s Board of Trustees adopted Measurable Targets. These Measurable Targets are actively monitored, providing a consistent metric to both guide and evaluate our efforts:

- Students completing CSU/UC a-g Requirements
- Students On Target for Graduation by Credits
- Smarter Balanced Assessments for Juniors
- Common Assessments in all Core Areas
- Student Attendance Rates

The key to learning is powerful instruction that is rigorous and relevant to all students. Effective instruction is possible when there is an understanding that rigor is essential for all students, that relevance makes rigor possible, and that strong relationships support both rigor and relevance in instruction. As our students have grown, we too will grow with a renewed commitment to do Whatever It Takes with intensity, coherence, and focus.

Effective instruction needs to be nurtured and supported. In order to do this, our efforts at collaboration continue to increase with intensity for the coherent purpose of improving student knowledge, skills, and success. Our goal is to relentlessly focus upon this work and not be distracted by other new programs or initiatives. Within this framework, Whittier Union’s Three Non-Negotiables result in the continual improvement of both teaching and learning:

1. Collaboration
2. Common Assessments
3. Directed, not Invited, Intervention
STEPS IN REALIZING THE VISION

Step #1: Common Instructional Materials

The District works with the Course-Alike Teams and Curriculum Improvement Teams (CITs), comprised of Department Chairs, to thoroughly investigate standards-based textbooks and supplemental materials, including educational technology, for each respective course. After having compared the materials and worked with them in the classroom, department chairs collect considerable input from their site so that CITs can make the final decision on a common textbook. All District schools have an opportunity to preview, analyze, and pilot materials before a decision is made on common Districtwide textbooks.

The District assumes the responsibility for purchasing books to ensure that each student has access to an individual textbook, whether it be a hard copy or digital. Sites are responsible for keeping accurate inventories and monitoring check out and collection procedures. Updated textbook inventories facilitate the movement of textbooks from one site to another, based on availability and need. This not only satisfies the requirements of the William’s Lawsuit Settlement, but also increases teacher collaboration focused on a common textbook. Other standards-based materials supporting student learning include Open Educational Resources, and teacher-created instructional resources that are shared across the District using Google Classroom, Moodle, and other innovative web-based tools that increase virtual team building across school borders.

Step #2: District Common Assessments, State Standards, and Targets

In addition to the use of common instructional materials, we collaboratively develop District Pacing Guides and Common Assessments with input from all schools. In the development and revision of District Common Assessments, we strive to ensure that we produce high-quality assessments that are carefully calibrated to accurately assess students’ mastery of standards and targets. These common assessments mirror state assessments in format, with multiple selected response questions, brief constructed response items, and performance tasks. Online administration of assessments allows students to demonstrate proficiency on a variety of digital tools, along with the course content.

It is critical that State Standards and Targets are used to guide the development of all District and Site-based Common Assessments. These assessments are then supported by an instructional program that provides students with the requisite content and skills for mastery of these standards. Teachers meet together regularly to ensure alignment of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment, providing a forum for the sharing of best instructional practices. Developing a common understanding and dissemination of effective instructional practices is done through varied mediums, including face-to-face at District and site course-alike meetings, and virtually through Google Classroom and Hangouts, email, and teachers’ websites.

So much of our academic accountability rests on the shoulders of the core academic departments; however, we also know that each and every discipline, core academic or not, contributes significantly to the success of our students. We want to very clearly demonstrate our support for all programs, core and elective. Many of the significant experiences that shaped all of our lives happened outside of English, Math, History, and Science classes. The District affirms and will continue to stand resolutely in support of these programs, protecting them in this changing world of academic accountability. Elective courses are a great asset in providing hands-on application of the standards and supporting a deeper understanding and context for teaching Literacy and Numeracy.
Step #3: Site-Based Common Assessments

Each site develops four Site-Based Common Assessments for the purpose of identifying students who are in need of immediate intervention and to assess the degree to which students are learning State Standards. The goal of these Site-based Common Assessments is to provide teachers and students with more immediate feedback on student performance, allowing teachers to adjust the pacing of content and identify students’ needs to be addressed in Embedded Support. It is expected that site course-alike teams construct common interim assessments to be given between administrations of the District Common Assessments. Teams discuss the results of these assessments in order to share best practices to continually improve instruction. We need to confidently identify gaps in student learning and proactively respond to early indications that some students are not mastering the standards.

Step #4: Implementing the Pyramid of Prevention and Intervention

When a student begins to fall behind academically and is not able to progress to the desired level of proficiency, then we, as a system, need to personally and effectively respond to that individual student. In the past, some California schools may have moved forward in covering the course content, accepting that a certain number of students were not going to keep up and learn at the same pace as the rest of the class. This is not acceptable in Whittier Union. The Pyramid of Prevention and Intervention is a systematic organization of academic and socio-emotional support that results in directed and required interventions for each struggling student. In essence, we are creating a system that holds students accountable when they do not learn. As the shape of a pyramid suggests, this system is developed to provide the most appropriate intervention in increasing levels of time and support for every student in need. It is recognized that a wide range of preventative actions are provided to all students so they will not need intervention, with high-quality instruction falling into this category; however, this is not enough. A range of supplemental supportive responses must be available — from an intervention that will meet the needs of many students, such as embedded support, to a more restrictive intervention for a smaller number of students, such as referral to a student study team or alternative education.

The expectation is that as professional educators we will:

- Intervene in a timely manner to support all students
- Direct, rather than invite, students to participate in interventions
- Provide a systematic next step for students who are still not successful
- Actively promote the most rigorous course of study for all students

Elements of the Pyramid of Prevention and Intervention

Freshman Support

- Whittier Union engages with all parents of incoming students through Parent Partnership, a ninth grade counseling program for parents and students. This program strengthens the tie between the school and parents before students enroll in the ninth grade. It is expected that 100% of students and parents will participate in this powerful program.

- With student leaders serving as guides, Freshman First Day provides an opportunity for ninth grade students to attend school and meet their teachers. This special time on the day before tenth through twelfth grade students begin classes provides a welcoming and personalized environment that facilitates their transition to high school. Each 9th grade student is encouraged to sign up for at least two co-curricular programs that will connect them to the school beyond the required academics.

- Link Crew is a specialized program where junior and senior student mentors meet regularly with entering ninth grade students. This mentor program develops strong relationships between incoming students and a supportive student leader who guides and supports the freshman, ensuring a successful transition to high school.
Whittier Union is committed to helping potentially vulnerable students with specialized support through Bridge, ACE and Guided Study programs. Academic Mentors, or upper classmen who have demonstrated strong academic and personal connections to students in need of support, assist these students throughout the year in their classes. All of these programs provide high levels of support and monitoring designed to increase academic and social success for this high-risk population.

Through Campus Watch, freshmen receive personalized attention and appropriate placement in support programs and coursework. This collaborative effort between middle schools and high schools results in a coordinated support network to students who face personal challenges, such as a serious illness, accidents, divorce, death or other major personal events. Critical dialogue between high school and middle school support personnel ensures that all students who face personal challenges are immediately connected to adults on each campus in whom they can confide and trust to provide them with the personal support they need.

**Connecting All Students to Systems of Support**

Whittier Union ensures that all students are connected to multiple systems of support to provide academic assistance to all students, while increasing student engagement and resiliency through connections to adult advocates and the educational process.

- Department, course, and teacher-level interventions quickly address students who are struggling, encouraging an attitude of hope while maintaining high expectations through the effective use of embedded and supplemental support. Embedded Support within the school day allows teachers to provide differentiated responses to students’ needs, ranging from completion of assignments to intensive academic support and skill development. Embedded Support is also utilized to provide AP/Honors students more opportunities to extend their learning.
• **Career Academies** are situated on each campus, connecting students to their future by providing them with college and career information, hands-on training, and adult mentor, thus providing relevance to their already rigorous curriculum. Academies focus on a variety of career paths, including business and computers, hospitality, film and media, health, sports medicine, public service, automotive, and architectural engineering.

• Extensions of support programs beyond the freshman year, such as *Guided Study* and *OASIS*, provide continued intensive support and monitoring to high-risk students in all grades. Additionally, *Puente* and *AVID* programs provide academic support and strong connections to key personnel, while instilling a college-going culture for under-represented students.

• Schools are open extended hours with adult and peer tutoring available, as well as access to computers through laptop carts and central computer labs. All students have a district Google account which facilitates communication with teachers, staff, and colleges.

**Guidance Support**
A strong guidance team at each site, including counselors, deans, school psychologists, Horizons Directors, and social work interns, dedicate their time and efforts to create a school environment that nurtures and supports students, proactively addressing personal and academic challenges.

• Whittier Union deeply values the role that counselors play in monitoring students academically and socially. Counselors play a vital role in ensuring that students progress to graduation and maintain a central responsibility in directing students to timely interventions so that students graduate in four years. Counselors are active partners with teachers in the academic preparation and success of students, promoting college-going cultures by encouraging students’ completion of UC/CSU a-g coursework and the development of rigorous four-year plans to maximize students’ post-secondary opportunities.

• Whittier Union feels in order for students to excel in the classroom, we must tend to their socio-emotional health. WUHSD’s Student Well-Being Initiative places social work interns on each campus to administer risk assessments, provide students with counseling and support, and provide crisis counseling, if the unfortunate need arises. Students now have access to mental health services, with individual or group counseling sessions available to students. A confidential environment is available to students who otherwise might not have access to one. Under the Director of Student Support Services, this team has proven to be a strong link between our guidance teams and community-based organizations that support our students.

• Certain student problems require on-going support beyond the capacity of the school system. Whittier Union is dedicated to building and maintaining strong relationships with community-based agencies that provide specialized counseling to address additional barriers to learning. On-site services are provided to students from mental health and substance abuse professionals, Whittier police officers, and County probation officers.

**Utilization of Time and Bell Schedules**
Time is one of the great resources that we harness to support our commitment to excellence. An outstanding culture of collaboration and trust has resulted in each campus crafting and approving alternative bell schedules that provide for teacher collaboration and embedded support.

• **Collaborative Time** is essential within a bell schedule so that teachers have adequate time to meet, identify struggling students, assess student success, and implement post-assessment protocols so that we are able to learn from one another and effectively improve teaching and learning.
• **Alternative Bell Schedules** allow for Embedded Support time scheduled within the school day so that interventions can be directed, not invited. Our intervention work is based on the knowledge and experience that invited interventions fail to attract the students who need to be present while interventions embedded in the school day result in effective student support.

**Preventative Supports and Structures**

Whittier Union embraces a culture that identifies new strategies to ensure equity and helps all students master standards by challenging some of our past assumptions.

• **Retesting** — Whittier Union is committed to helping students learn. In a standards-based system, the goal is for students to master the content. Recognizing that some students learn at different rates, it is a District expectation that students who fail a test are provided additional support and then retested with an alternative assessment. In this way, we help all students grow academically. The appropriate consequence for failing a test is to require the student to learn the content. Retesting ensures that students are not released from the responsibility of learning the course content, keeping students in the game and institutionalizing hope.

• **Grading** — Teachers and departments explore and adopt site-based course-alike grading systems so that grades more accurately reflect learning. The goal is to develop a grading system that is not punitive, but rather indicative of learning. Course-alike grading discussions and policies ensure equitable opportunities for students.

• **Increased Enrollment in Advanced Coursework** — Active monitoring of multiple measures ensures equitable access to enriched learning opportunities, including the review of middle school SBAC scores and a District Incoming Placement test. Effective use of Embedded Support ensures continued success of the increased number of students enrolled in Advanced Placement and Honors coursework. Additionally, monitoring of 11th grade SBAC scores for those who scored in the “Conditional” range informs student placement in ERWC and advanced math courses, eliminating the need for students to take remediation courses at a California State University campus.

• **Multiple Avenues of Support** — Coupled with Embedded Support, parallel classes, voluntary Saturday School, after-school tutoring, and specialized support programs provide additional learning opportunities to ensure students master the content without having to repeat the course. Analysis of gaps in student performance data results in targeted support for individual students.

• **Relationships** — Student success is strongly related to the quality of relationships students have with adults and peers. Success in school, as well as after graduation, depends upon the ability to respect others, respect materials, be adaptable, and appropriately deal with frustration. Successful students demonstrate empathy, cooperation, and leadership. Whittier Union believes these skills must be modeled, taught, and reinforced all day, every day, by each and every staff member. Just as academic interventions are directed, not invited, so too are social and behavioral supports.
Increased Student and Parent Communication

We are committed to ensuring that both students and parents receive timely information on student progress. Helping parents monitor their child’s grades and assignments strengthens the partnership between the school and community.

- Students and parents receive grades from each class every 4.5 weeks. More frequent grading periods result in increased communication with parents and help identify students who are struggling academically in an expedient manner.

- Teachers use Loop, a web-based calling system, to send recorded messages, texts, or emails to parents in their primary language. Messages are specific to each child with information about upcoming assignments and commendations, as well as areas in need of improvement. Schools also use Teleparent to send out messages related to schoolwide activities to specific groups of students. The increased school-to-home communication empowers parents to become active partners in their child’s academic progress.

- Web-based tools communicate critical school and student information. Aeries Portal online student information system provides parents, students, and teachers with real-time access to grades, assignments, and attendance; while Teachers’ Web Sites, Google Classroom, and other learning management systems elaborate course expectations and assignments.

- Besides the typical parent-teacher conferences and meetings, parents engage with the school community through specific workshops and information nights that serve to support their child’s academic success, including Senior Project Night, Future Frosh Night, College Night, School Site Council, English Learner Parent Symposium, and English Learner Advisory Councils. Parent Centers are available on sites so families have access to technological resources and translation services to facilitate their involvement with their child’s education and the school.

Why Implement These Strategies?

Why implement these strategies? We have seen it work. As a District, we have witnessed the most significant academic growth in those areas where there has been a high level of commitment to the Three Non-Negotiables with the implementation of pacing guides, common assessments, analyzing student results, sharing best instructional practices and effectively implementing the Pyramid of Prevention and Intervention.

The purpose of the District and Site-based Common Assessments is to provide teachers with data they can use to redirect instruction and improve student performance. These frequent assessments help identify students who require additional time and support to master the standards, preventing students from falling behind academically. Assessments provide an early warning system, giving us the ability to assist students with proactive support. We do not want to wait until a student fails a course to provide assistance.

The intent of both District and Site-based Common Assessments is to more closely monitor student learning and to guide instructional decisions. Ultimately, our goal is to increase our students’ level of achievement in the most rigorous course of study, thus improving our four-year graduation rate. Increased rigor, balanced with active supports and attention to relationships, ensures student success. We must commit ourselves to collectively do Whatever It Takes to help our students improve academically and effectively learn and grow.

WUHSD’s Three Non-Negotiables

1. Collaboration
2. Common Assessments
3. Directed Intervention
CRITICAL ROLES

In order to effectively support the implementation of the District’s instructional plan we continue to support the following positions as leaders on the team in this very important work. Teamwork is a dynamic process involving two or more people who share leadership and collective responsibility for reaching common goals to improve student learning. Teamwork is not always easy, but is valued within WUHSD for its positive synergistic effect on both students’ and teachers’ learning.

Teachers

Teachers play the central role in increasing student achievement and need to continually review and improve their instructional practice while engaging students in the learning process. Through collaborative standards-based instructional planning, teachers utilize data to maximize learning and provide a critical support net for all students. The creative energies and considerable insights of capable caring educators provide the cornerstones of effective teaching. Gifted teachers have touched all of our lives. It is our desire to ensure that the insights into effective teaching strategies that result in measurable increases in student achievement be shared and expanded through collaborative meetings.

Course Lead Teachers

Course Lead Teachers coordinate the implementation of pacing guides and the administration of at least four District Common Assessments per year, along with an additional four Site-Based Common Assessments. With their course-alike team, Leads guide discussions on the alignment of test questions to standards, ensure that answer sheets are scanned in a timely manner, and provide access to data that will enlighten instructional practices. In order to build capacity within their course team, Course Leads facilitate open and respectful discussion at regular meetings at which the team analyzes student performance, identifying areas that need to be spiraled onto the next exam or those areas in need of scaffolds to improve student learning. A major focus of this facilitation is to share best instructional practices that improve student learning and mastery of the standards and targets. At the district level, the Course Lead actively participates in District Best Practices and Summer Professional Learning, equitably representing voices of the site team at district meetings and communicating district dialogue, decisions, and rationales to the site team. Leads demonstrates respect for other sites in the development of a strong lateral network in order to share best practices across the district.

Department Chairs

Department Chairs are instructional leaders who guide teachers in the area of curriculum and instruction, while also coordinating and supporting the work of Course Lead Teachers. Department Chairs ensure that at least four District Common Assessments and four Site-Based Common Assessments are implemented and refined each year in a manner consistent with the Assessment for Learning process. Additionally, the Chair is knowledgeable about the strengths and challenges inherent in each course-alike team and is able to support the Course Lead in making the next step. In support of continual growth, Chairs ensures that collaboration occurs in courses without Leads. Department Chairs facilitate collaboration and attend to the needs of their team, fostering open communication and productive dialogue between all team members. As an integral part of school leadership teams, Department Chairs provide valuable input into the development of the Master Schedule, the adoption of new courses, the appropriate use of technology, and the development of high-quality teachers.

Technology Support Teachers

In this day of increasing technology, teachers at each site support their peers in the effective implementation and use of valuable electronic tools. The EADMS On-Site Support Teacher trains teachers how to align questions to standards within the assessment database, print tests, scan student answer sheets, and print useful reports that will inform instructional practices. The Aeries Support Teacher provides assistance in the use of the web-based student information system for the immediate communication of assignments, grades, and other student data to parents and students, as well as support in the set-up of electronic grade books within the system. With the dramatic expansion of devices on the sites and all of the technological tools available, Ed Tech Leads assist teachers in the seamless integration of technology with the curriculum within the classroom. All support roles serve as technical guides in effectively implementing web-based technologies manageable for teachers.
**Intervention Specialists and Data Leads**

The goal of the Intervention Specialist and Data Lead is to increase the number of students at each site who are on-target for graduation at each grade level; increase the number of students who complete the A-G course sequence; and, improve the graduation rate. Both of these teacher leaders use grades, attendance, and other relevant data to assign students to the appropriate intervention at the school or within the community, monitoring their progress in order to continually assess and reassign students as needed. Intervention Specialists and Data Leads analyze student progress, monitor the effectiveness of interventions, and provide periodic feedback to stakeholders regarding intervention efforts. Data Leads focus on LCAP interventions and the eight State Priorities; whereas, Intervention Specialists have a more localized focus on each site.
PRACTICES FOLLOWING
DISTRICT & SITE COMMON ASSESSMENTS

Review Outcome Data
The student performance data derived from both District and Site-Based Common Assessments provide invaluable information to teachers, students, parents, and other instructional leaders. This information is used by course-alike teams, departments, and District Curriculum Improvement Teams to drive discussions about student achievement and the improvement of instruction. These discussions, facilitated by Department Chairs or Course Lead Teachers, utilize data from student performance on the standards-based assessments to analyze the relationship between instruction and assessment results in order to continually improve instructional effectiveness. The data identify where adjustments need to be made in instruction and Embedded Support, providing for the development of focused interventions that invite students to take responsibility for their own learning. Common Assessment results also guide the development of enrichment opportunities for students who have mastered the content.

The District’s and Site’s Role in Developing Common Assessments

The District is expected to:

- Provide staff development and facilitate the continued development and refinement of the Common Assessments, including development in assessment literacy with new assessments containing multiple selected response items, brief constructed responses, and performance tasks
- Provide facilitation development for Department Chairs and Course Leads who, as instructional leaders, develop strong course-alike teams and guide discussions based on aggregate common assessment data results
- Ensure that centralized training promotes the sharing of best practices across the District and is continually improved based on insights gained at each site
- Provide the support and resources needed to create and implement Common Assessments, including technological resources

Each School is expected to:

- Develop and regularly administer locally produced Site-Based Common Assessments that support and complement the District Common Assessments
- Carefully align Site-Based Common Assessments with State Standards and Targets to provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to be successful on high-stakes assessments and in post-secondary options
- Collaborate with site and district peers in the evaluation and revision of District Common Assessments, ensuring that sharing is done in an open and considerate manner to not only improve student learning, but also to improve pedagogy in every classroom

The Sites Working Collaboratively

Department Chairs and Course Leads are critical to the collaborative development of all Common Assessments. As such, they need to be prepared to recognize and evaluate quality assessments, coordinate and facilitate departmental discussions on student performance data, and make recommendations to adapt instructional strategies and course content based on these discussions. Additionally, Department Chairs and Course Leads must attend to unique dynamics among their teachers to develop an effective interdependent team. The District recognizes that this is demanding and complex work; therefore, WUHSD is committed to providing a high level of ongoing support, training, and consultation to ensure successful development and implementation of Common Assessments based upon State Standards and Targets.

Two primary structures for districtwide collaboration and ongoing support include a week of professional learning in the summer for each of the core academic areas and continued collaboration for representatives from each course following the administration of each common assessment. In the summer, each of the sites sends the Course Lead and one other person from each course to their department’s week of Summer Professional Learning; i.e., Math Week, ELA Week, Science Week, Social Science Week, or World Language Week. Throughout the school year, Best Practice days occur following each Common Assessment. At these days, the same group (Course Lead + 1 from each site) meets to advance the summer work and discuss implications for curriculum, instruction, and assessment for their specific course. After both
the summer work and Best Practice days, Course Leads takes back the learning and decisions to their site course-
like teams, which includes everyone who teaches that 
course, meeting at least twice each month. While 
advancing the implementation of State Standards, 
technology is consciously incorporated throughout all 
professional learning events to model seamless integration 
in support of learning. These practices rely on increasing 
individual and organizational capacity through the use of 
course-alike teams at both the district and site level.

IMPROVING INSTRUCTION THROUGH 
ANALYZING ASSESSMENT DATA

The purpose of District and Site-Based Common Assessments is to provide teachers with data that informs 
instruction. Gaps in student learning can be identified quickly and addressed by adjusting instruction, providing a 
stronger foundation for continued learning. These assessments also help identify students who are required to attend 
Embedded Support or those who would benefit from supplemental support so they do not fall behind academically. Students must be provided with the support they need as soon as they are in danger of not mastering standards. Traditionally, many classrooms moved on to the next set of lessons, regardless of students’ performance. New 
curriculum was introduced and taught, despite data that indicated some students did not learn the material. The 
purpose of Common Assessments is to provide data that illuminates student learning in order to inform instructional 
decisions.

The District and Site-Based Common Assessments help teachers:

- Monitor student learning in a timely manner rather than waiting for grading periods when it is often too late 
to prevent a student from failing a class
- Effectively communicate specific student’s needs to parents, counselors, and other support personnel
- Identify students who may be placed into a more rigorous course, such as Honors or Advanced Placement
- Collectively deconstruct teaching and learning in order to make immediate changes in instruction, including 
the spiraling or scaffolding of content
- Identify and share effective instructional practices so 
that instruction can be refined by collective input from 
other professionals
- Identify students and topics for Embedded Support or 
enrichment opportunities
- Evaluate programmatic decisions based on students’ 
needs; such as, increasing the number of advanced 
courses and eliminating the number of lower-level 
courses
- Provide timely and effective support targeted to meet 
individual learning needs so that we not only increase 
the number of students on-track for graduation, but also 
ensure that all students are achieving at high levels
TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING QUALITY COMMON ASSESSMENTS

The District has established the following beliefs that serve to guide the construction, implementation, and follow-up activities for all common assessments.

- The assessments must be carefully aligned to State Standards and Targets, the Pacing Guide, and classroom instruction to accurately measure what students have been asked to learn
- The questions and tasks must be individually analyzed to ensure that they are clear, focused, reliable, and valid assessments that accurately measure a specific curriculum target
- Each assessment must have a designated level of performance for determining proficiency supported by rubrics and scoring guides
- The assessment results must identify students who are in need of Embedded Support, supplemental intervention and retesting, as well as those who are ready for enrichment opportunities
- When analyzed at the class and department level, the data must elicit questions to be discussed by course-alike team members so that insights are gained to improve the quality of student learning through improved instruction
- Assessment results must be tracked from year to year so that each course has a longitudinal record of past performance to adequately gauge the level of student learning and instruction from year to year
- Collaboration following administration of assessments must focus on strategies to improve student learning and the modification of future assessments.

The benefit of Common Assessments is only realized when effective collaborative analysis after each assessment results in improvements to both teaching and learning

Guidelines for Facilitators

1. Be assertive about keeping time. A protocol that doesn't allow for all the questions to be discussed will do a disservice to the facilitator, the work presented, and the participants. Make sure that you understand the process and have prepared all of the information necessary ahead of time. Encourage all participants to have a voice and avoid letting one participant monopolize the discussion.

2. Be protective of people’s opinions. By establishing a respectful, professional climate, people will be encouraged to speak up when they observe something important. You must keep the conversation professional and not personal.

3. Encourage substantive discourse. Without the thoughtful and probing questions contained in the protocols and the comments of insightful practitioners the benefit of the time invested in common assessments and analyzing data will be lost.

4. Ensure that discussions focus on highlighting best practices and not diminishing those teachers whose students may not have performed well on the assessment.

5. Make certain that each course-alike team establish norms for these meetings. Some of these norms may include:
   - Be prepared for the meeting
   - Start on time and end on time
   - Cover all questions in the protocol
   - Stay focused on the task
   - Be respectful at all times
   - No side conversations
   - Share responsibilities and hold one another accountable
ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING (A4L) COLLABORATIVE CYCLE

This protocol should be used during the discussion of all District and Site Common Assessments and may be broken into two meetings: Pre-Assessment Preview Meeting and Post-Assessment Analysis Meeting.

Preview: Pre-Assessment Meeting
1. Hand out copies of the assessment and/or use electronic source
2. Review the pacing guide and the content covered
3. Review problem areas identified from previous years’ assessment data and share resources and strategies to address areas
4. Share instructional strategies to ensure all students learn the content on upcoming assessment
5. Identify topics to be scaffolded and strategies to ensure access to content for all students

Preparing for the Common Assessment Meeting
1. All student answer sheets are scanned
2. Run Testing Activity Report by Teacher to ensure that all answer sheets are scanned
3. Additional data is compiled by Course Lead for teachers’ use, depending upon type of assessment (Standards Summary, Item Summary, Item Detail, or Response Distribution)

Analysis: Post-Assessment Meeting
1. All teachers who administered the exam are expected to attend
2. Hand out copies of the assessment and/or use electronic source. Copies of the framework are available for reference purposes (this may also be digital)
3. Review the standards or targets measured by assessment items or the rubric
4. Participants analyze the data and discuss implications for teaching and learning. Possible questions include:
   - What are the students’ strengths and weaknesses on the assessment?
   - What successful strategies resulted in strong results?
   - Which standards or targets need to be spiraled and revisited on next assessment?
   - Which standards or targets posed challenges to students and why? What strategies address these challenges?
   - How can you use the data to inform teaching in your class now?
   - Based on the data, if you could teach the curriculum over again, what would you do differently?
   - What did you learn from teaching this unit and assessment results that you will apply to the next unit?
   - How do these results compare with other evidence you have of student learning?
   - How much confidence do you have in the data? Are questions on the assessment valid? Do more questions need to be added to improve assessment?

Variables for Deeper Analysis of Student Results may include:
- Language Fluency
- Alignment Issues
- Instructional Strategies
- Motivation & Engagement Strategies
- Homework Assignments
- Sequence of Curriculum

Embedded Support & Enrichment
- Corrective Instruction in Class
- After-school Intensive Interventions
- Grouping Strategies
- Time Allocation and Pacing
- Guided Practice in Class

Reflecting on Assessment Meetings
Periodically, the course-alike team evaluates their performance, reflecting on how they have experienced the meetings and what steps can be taken to improve the conference for future Common Assessment meetings.
- What went well in the meeting?
- What do we need to work on in order to improve team performance?
- Are we meeting our goals and expectations for collaboration?
Whittier Union High School District’s
Unique School Programs
(562) 698-8121

California High School
Ext. 3000
Gold Ribbon School
Modified Block Schedule
Architecture & Engin. Academy
Automotive Academy
Business Academy
Culinary Arts Academy
Health Academy
Scholars Academy
Puente
Guided Study
ACE

La Serna High School
Ext. 6000
Gold Ribbon School
Modified Six-Period Day
Film & Media Academy
Green & Clean Academy
Sports Careers Academy
Newcomer’s Program (ELD)
OASIS
Puente
Guided Study

Pioneer High School
Ext. 5000
Gold Ribbon School
Modified Block Schedule
AVID
Guided Study
ACE

Santa Fe High School
Ext. 4000
Gold Ribbon School
Modified Block Schedule
Business Academy
Architectural Academy
AVID Demonstration School
Newcomer’s Program (ELD)
Guided Study

Whittier High School
Ext. 2000
Gold Ribbon School
Modified Block Schedule
Cardinal Computer Academy
AVID
Puente
Guided Study

Frontier High School
Continuation
Ext. 1200
Extended Year Calendar
Model Continuation High School

Sierra Vista High School
Independent Study
Ext. 1300
Extended Year Calendar
Blended Instruction Model

Childcare Program for WUHSD Students

Whatever It Takes
Notes