Learning 2.0: All Students Reaching Global Standards of Achievement, Leadership and Citizenship: Improving Teaching and Learning in a Standards-led System

Kathleen C. Greider, Superintendent
Michael Galluzzo, Assistant Superintendent

FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
1 Monteith Drive
Farmington, CT 06032
(860) 673-8268
www.fpsct.org

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Global Standards of Achievement, Leadership and Citizenship: Improving Teaching and Learning in a Standards-led System

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PREFACE

The Farmington Board of Education’s adopted new five year, district goals on March 6, 2010. It reaffirmed its commitment to standards-led teaching and learning practices as the organizing improvement strategy for the Farmington Public Schools. Central to these goals is the explicit role of thinking and learning skills which are often referred to as the core competencies and dispositions required for college and work readiness. While many of these skills have implicitly been embedded in teaching for understanding, the new board goals place these dynamic thinking and learning skills at the very core of the accountability system by making them primary indicators for district improvement.

This “white paper” is the fourth in a series dating back more than a decade. Each has captured the major themes for district improvement, including: the leadership strategies, core Farmington values and beliefs, organizational structures that support the work of improvement and aspects of organizational behavior and culture vital for a dynamic organization.

The previous papers articulated, in detail, the processes for the development of standards, assessments and curriculum. It was this innovation in the way in which the district approached the content and focus for student learning that propelled student learning to higher levels in the past decade.
I. EMERGING PRIORITIES WITHIN THE STANDARDS-LED FRAMEWORK

The Farmington Public Schools’ standards for student learning define the skills, knowledge and understandings we believe all students need in order to become fully functioning well-educated citizens. Our core academic content standards provide teachers, students, parents, and the community with a clear definition of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level, in each content area and upon graduation. Farmington’s new district goals identify the eight core competencies which are embedded in our content standards. Farmington core academic content standards are aligned with and embedded within the district philosophy and mission and provide a pathway for achieving the district’s five-year goals.

This paper describes the framework for a standards-led system, a theory of action for the improvement process in the school system, the beliefs that guide system structure and direction, the current strategies for the improvement of teaching and learning and the processes by which standards are developed, implemented and monitored.

Evolving District Priorities and Strategies for Improving Student Achievement

The Farmington Public Schools standards-led program has evolved as the result of continuous improvement processes. The shift in emphasis and sharpening of the focus of various initiatives is rooted firmly in this history of program development. With standards and curriculum well developed, three years ago Dr. Eileen Howley introduced the Institute on Teaching for Understanding in order to engage teachers in learning and sharing strategies for raising the level of instruction in all classrooms. The new five-year goals require a further advance in teaching practices by placing students more explicitly at the center of the learning process – demonstrating higher levels of engagement, interest and responsibility for their own learning. As a consequence of this new focus, the district leadership engaged a team of faculty and administrators in the development of a set of “principles of learning” based on the best thinking in the field of learning and cognition. The result was the crafting of the Farmington Framework for Teaching and Learning (June 2010). With the articulation of general principles of learning, we seek to bring coherence to effective teaching practices, while engaging faculty in developing innovative teaching strategies which support student centered instruction. The improvement of instruction through the implementation of the Framework for Teaching and Learning’s core principles is the central improvement strategy for realizing the new district goals.

Professional staff have begun to use the “Instructional Core” as the model for representing the dynamics of teaching and learning in classrooms. Richard Elmore, Anrig Professor of Educational Leadership at Harvard University, has described this heuristic for conceptualizing the improvement of student learning. It is a useful model for framing the evolving shift in our district priorities – improvement of instructional strategies that support the development of core competencies and dispositions.

“There are only three ways to improve student learning at scale: You can raise the level of the content that students are taught. You can increase the skill and knowledge that teachers bring to the teaching of that content. And you can
increase the level of students’ active learning of the content. That’s it. Everything else is instrumental. That is, everything that not in the instructional core can only affect student learning and performance by, in some way, influencing what goes on inside the core…….So the first principle of instructional improvement is that increases in student learning only occur as a consequence of improvements in the level of content, teachers’ knowledge and skill and student engagement. The second principle follows from the first: If you change any single element of the instructional core, you have to change the other two.” (From “Improving the Instructional Core”)

Therefore, if you isolate one component of the instructional core for improvement without attending to the others, e.g. creating and presenting higher level curriculum, without improving teacher knowledge and skill, it will result in low level instruction and low level learning of high level content. The relationship between students and content is mediated by teaching behaviors. To increase the students’ role in the learning process, you need to improve the teacher’s knowledge and skill and ensure that the curriculum and assessments measure up to the higher expectations for students’ skills and knowledge.

If increases in student learning are exclusively the result of what takes place in the core, then we will need to continue to organize, align and strengthen all systems and structures, leadership functions and management activities to support the improvement of the dynamics within the instructional core. Implementing the principles and strategies of the Framework for Teaching and Learning is the primary district strategy for achieving the five year goals. This paper focuses on supportive strategies and initiatives that will lead the district to realizing its core mission and goals.
II. BOARD OF EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY, GOALS AND “VISION OF THE FPS GRADUATE”

FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BOARD OF EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

The Farmington Public Schools are committed to the belief that all children are capable of attaining high levels of educational achievement in preparation for productive, rewarding lives and responsible citizenship. Students will reach this goal through their own diligence and effort, and through a school and school district learning climate that responds to individual student academic needs, a curriculum that challenges, adequate resources, and skilled, professional instruction. Furthermore, a belief in social equality underlies Farmington’s commitment to providing a high quality of education for all students. Policy 0000(a)

The MISSION of the FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The mission of the Farmington Public Schools is to offer a common standards-based educational program that will enable every student to achieve rigorous performance standards. (Anticipated revision, October 2010)

SCHOOL DISTRICT FIVE-YEAR GOALS 2010-2015

1. All students will demonstrate performance standards in critical thinking and reasoning and meet rigorous core academic content* standards by accessing, interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating ideas and information, drawing evidence-based conclusions, synthesizing new learning with prior knowledge and reflecting critically on learning.

2. All students will demonstrate performance standards in collaboration and communication and meet rigorous core academic content* standards by participating effectively in a variety of teams, actively listening and responding to the ideas of others, sharing responsibility for outcomes, articulating ideas clearly in multiple formats and using technology tools to enhance communication.

3. All students will demonstrate performance standards in problem solving and innovation and meet rigorous core academic content* standards by recognizing problems, analyzing data, asking questions, utilizing a variety of resources, thinking flexibly, making connections and seeking practical, innovative, and entrepreneurial solutions.

4. All students will demonstrate performance standards in self-direction and resourcefulness and meet rigorous core academic content* standards by exploring interests, taking initiative, setting learning goals, demonstrating persistent effort, adapting to change with resiliency and exhibiting ethical leadership and responsible citizenship.

FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CORE ACADEMIC CONTENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS
2010-2015:

1. All students will meet established **English / language arts** performance standards by demonstrating the skills to read, understand, interpret, discuss and critique diverse texts and to communicate effectively through independent and collaborative writing for a wide variety of purposes and audiences. They will take initiative to explore interests and respond to problems through research and use their literacy skills to exercise leadership and responsible citizenship.

2. All students will meet established **mathematics** performance standards by demonstrating problem solving and reasoning skills that advance understanding and application of essential mathematical concepts. They will make mathematical connections to their lives and use a variety of tools and representations to effectively communicate mathematical thinking.

3. All students will meet established **science** performance standards by demonstrating the critical thinking, technology and inquiry skills in life, physical and earth sciences. They will examine natural phenomena, pose and evaluate arguments based on evidence, explore interests and make decisions about contemporary issues in science.

4. All students will meet established **social studies** performance standards by demonstrating critical thinking, reasoning and research skills applied to the study of history, geography, culture, and political and economic systems in order to make informed decisions, pose innovative solutions, and meet the challenges of participatory citizenship in an increasingly pluralistic society and interdependent world.

5. All students will meet established **world language** performance standards by demonstrating the linguistic and cultural skills needed to communicate, collaborate and connect with people of different experiences and perspectives from around the world.

6. All students will meet established **health, physical education, and wellness** performance standards by demonstrating self-direction and resourcefulness in setting goals, solving problems and seeking feedback to develop and maintain a personal plan for life-long wellness.

7. All students will meet established **music, fine and applied arts** performance standards by demonstrating an understanding of the problem solving and communication processes of creating, performing and responding. They will acquire an understanding of classical and contemporary arts and their impact in diverse cultures.

Specific, measurable performance indicators associated with each of the district goals are currently under development. Annual district, school and student performance information is collected and portrayed on each indicator for each goal. These data provide trend information as the district addresses and monitors its goals for continuous improvement.
“Vision of the FPS Graduate”

Farmington Graduates: Reaching Global Standards of Achievement, Leadership, and Citizenship

Farmington Public Schools’ Graduates will acquire an understanding of the essential knowledge and skills in the core academic disciplines and develop the thinking and learning skills necessary to meet the challenges of local, national and global citizenship in a rapidly changing world.

Critical Thinking and Reasoning: Students access, interpret, analyze, and evaluate ideas and information, draw evidence-based conclusions, synthesize new learning with prior knowledge and reflect critically on learning.

Collaboration and Communication: Students participate effectively in a variety of teams, actively listen and respond to the ideas of others, share responsibility for outcomes, articulate ideas clearly in multiple formats and use technology tools to enhance communication.

Problem Solving and Innovation: Students recognize problems, analyze data, ask questions, utilize a variety of resources, think flexibly, make connections and seek practical, innovative and entrepreneurial solutions.

Self-Direction and Resourcefulness: Students explore interests, take initiative, set learning goals, demonstrate persistent effort, adapt to change with resiliency, and exhibit ethical leadership and responsible citizenship.
III. CORE BELIEFS OF THE FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Farmington Public Schools are committed to core beliefs that guide our work. These beliefs frame our goals, program development, and support systems. These beliefs focus instruction, curriculum, and assessment to ensure that all students achieve at high levels. Farmington communicates its rigorous expectations through its programs and core content standards.

**Expectations matter.** Teachers maintain high expectations for all students through continual encouragement, specific and timely feedback, tenacity in providing targeted support, and through communicating that all students have the capacity to meet district standards. We believe that maintaining high expectations leads to higher levels of student achievement.

**Effort matters.** Students in the Farmington Public Schools succeed at high levels through their own efforts and the collective efforts of their parents, educators, and the community. It is through students’ own hard work and dedication to the pursuit of excellence that they will succeed. We believe that increasing effort leads to higher levels of student achievement.

**Instruction matters.** Teachers refine their teaching craft through ongoing study and action research, observation of instruction, and collaboration with colleagues. Teachers are actively engaged and committed to applying proven instructional strategies to reach every student. All educators demonstrate their commitment to instructional and curricular development for the classroom, team, school, and district through their leadership in improvement efforts. We believe that improving instruction leads to higher levels of student achievement.

**Relationships matter.** All staff members create and maintain an environment that promotes respect, trust, and understanding, and fosters communication and problem-solving. We nurture the whole child and ensure that each student receives a new opportunity every day to perform at his/her best. We believe that developing caring and supportive relationships between and among educators, students, and parents leads to higher levels of student achievement.

**Results matter.** Administrators, teachers, and students measure progress toward meeting and exceeding defined standards and goals. Through the ongoing and collaborative analysis of student work and data, we hold students and each other accountable for continuous improvement. We believe that sharing and using results to inform our decisions about instruction, resources, curriculum, and program development leads to higher levels of student achievement.
IV. IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH SYSTEMS PLANNING

The Farmington five year goals have broad implications for the school system. While they build upon successful existing practices, these goals require us to develop new indicators for district improvement and accountability and to conduct a full examination of our current core curriculum development, assessment and instructional practices. The five year goals situate the core competencies and disposition in the content standards. They place a greater value on the role of the student as an active participant in the learning process. Students must be actively engaged to innovate, collaborate, reflect on learning and solve problems which they find relevant to their lives and to the world. This next level of work requires us to examine and align all of our systems in order to bring coherence to these improvement efforts. Therefore, for example, using the instructional core as a systems lens, we know that by changing the role of the student in the learning process we implicate changes in the curriculum and the knowledge and skills of teachers.

From our systems perspective we must ask:

- How do these goals translate into different student tasks and outcomes?
- How do they translate into different teacher activities in the classroom and roles outside the classroom?
- How do they impact curriculum development and assessment practices?
- How do they translate into different actions on the part of teams of teachers?
- How do they translate into different leadership actions at the building level to support teaching and learning?
- How do they translate into different leadership actions at the central office level?
- What are the most powerful strategies that will help bridge the gap between the present state and the desired future?
- What are the implications of these goals for the organization as a whole?

This “white paper” will address several of these questions.

A Theory Of Action For School/District Improvement

Improving student performance and learning opportunities for ALL students is the central goal of the Farmington Public Schools’ commitment to continuous improvement. The Farmington Public Schools use a strategic planning process for continuous improvement to create interdependence among district and school improvement plans and priorities. The District Leadership Council and principal and teacher-led School Development Teams create school improvement plans based on an analysis of performance data. In this context, teams of teachers and administrators identify key building goals that regularly focus on improving reading, writing, and mathematics and other disciplines. To support these goals at the individual teacher and classroom level, the teacher evaluation system requires teachers to connect their grade level or program goals to the work of their colleagues and to district goals. The Educator Evaluation and Professional Development (EEPD) plan relies on teams of teachers working together to use
student performance data to design and monitor interventions to improve teaching, learning and achievement. **Results matter.**

The theory of action that provides the foundation for the district’s improvement work is grounded in the belief that the change process is a continuous one and should be strategic by its nature. Improvements should be driven by data—critical and multiple forms of information—that inform the school and district plan of action. The district’s theory of action requires the analysis of data on every level of the organization—from students to teachers to principals to central office. Everyone has to “own” the efforts and initiatives for continuous improvement. Any improvement efforts need to be connected to the larger goals and expectations for the school district. Our theory of action is predicated on the idea that meaningful instructional improvement is driven by the district’s philosophy, mission and goals, which are embraced and purposely acted upon by the professionals that staff the school system. Therefore, the knowledge base of the entire professional staff is both valued and harnessed as a critical variable for improvement.

The school system’s theory of action has continued to evolve as we have come to understand the role of staff expertise, teacher leadership and the power of effective collaborative team structures and activities for instructional improvement. We have come to appreciate that expertise, knowledge, problem solving and other cognitive capabilities are distributed among many individuals collaborating over complex tasks. One of the central leadership functions and challenges is to unleash the collective capacity of our teaching faculty and staff to its greatest potential using collaborative inquiry processes. This requires us to develop a deeper vision for team learning which in turn requires team leaders to develop the facilitation and planning skills that support the deep engagement of faculty in the examination of instructional practices. All members of the school community must contribute if the district is to achieve its mission.

The central organizing principle of the six action statements of the Farmington Theory of Action is the improvement of teaching and learning:

- cultivate expertise in teaching and learning as the means for improving student achievement
- cultivate leadership at all levels of the organization focusing on the improvement of standards, instruction and assessment
- foster a belief system driven by principles of efficacy, persistence and engagement through greater student ownership of the learning process
- use data in systematic ways as a vehicle for examining school, classroom, and individual student progress
- make leadership actions more transparent in order to accelerate the impact of those actions by fostering greater understanding of the improvement processes at work in Farmington
- teach students to assume a greater role in the learning process through full implementation of the Framework for Teaching and Learning, by providing opportunities to reflect, to collaborate, to relate learning to their personal experiences and to the world, and other active learning strategies
V. EMERGING DISTRICT STRATEGIES FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The five components of our district theory of action are integrated in the following strategies for district improvement.

1. Framework for Teaching and Learning

The Framework for Teaching and Learning was developed by a team of teachers and administrators during the 2009-2010 school year as part of the district strategy to codify its instructional beliefs and practices. The Framework for Teaching and Learning defines Farmington’s Core Principles of Learning and the expectations for teachers and for students. The principles and expectations provide definition to our vision of teaching and learning and are consistent with the standards-based expectations defined in the district five-year goals. They exemplify the kind of learning environments, teaching practices and student roles and expectations that foster the dispositions and learning skills at the core of the new Board of Education five year goals. The Framework also provides a common point of reference for professional reflection and dialogue about instruction for teachers and administrators alike. The Framework will also serve to guide faculty as we identify a set of core instructional strategies that all teachers should be skilled at applying to their classrooms.

Implementation of the Framework over the course of the next three to five years is the central strategy within the district’s systemic approach to continuous improvement. It defines the common language critical for communication about instruction, while focusing professional staff on topics and strategies for defining problems of practice. The Framework offers definition of concepts and behaviors that can and will shape school and team goals and professional development, while providing coherence to instructional practices. It also provides a broad set of principles that teams can apply as they investigate the efficacy of their instructional practices. Instruction matters.

2. Collaborative Inquiry

Collaborative Inquiry (CI) is the vital organizing process for the continuous improvement of teaching, learning and leading. CI is the ongoing investigation of the effectiveness of instructional practices and leadership practices as they result in improvements in student learning. It involves the disciplined analysis of multiple sources of data on student learning and the examination of the instruction. At the classroom level, teachers study their instructional practices through the examination of lesson design, the tasks and products that students engage in and through the observation of teaching and learning. At the leadership level, CI is the continuous collaborative examination of problems of practice for leading school and district improvements in student learning and organizational development.

We have come to understand that we are perfectly organized and knowledgeable about achieving the results that we have at this time. In order to achieve the renewed vision for all students, we require a high performing data culture, one in which teachers collaborate regularly to examine evidence of student performance, to make adjustments to instruction through the investigation of
best practices, to plan together and to commit themselves to the changes in practice that they agree upon.

CI requires a high level of trust, so that professional educators can speak openly about what is and is not working, to observe one another’s practice with the goal of improving everyone’s practice. In effect, each professional owns the results of all of the students and invests in the improvement of their colleagues’ instructional practices. Relationships matter.

3. Systems Thinking Processes to Improve Student Learning at Scale

Systems thinking provides the conceptual structure for leadership actions and generates coherence and focus to district improvement processes. “Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes…a discipline for seeing the ‘structures’ that underlie complex situations, and for discerning high from low leverage change.” (Senge)

The District Leadership Team has identified the following systems: Goals Setting and Accountability, Leadership, Instruction and Curriculum Development, Human Resources, Capacity Building, and Communications. We recognize that to effectively implement our improvement strategy, the Framework for Teaching and Learning, we must account for the systems implicated in the change process. Systems thinking and action planning will create the powerful through line to the instructional core.

DLC will utilize a systems thinking approach to the full implementation of the Framework for Teaching and Learning and the achievement of the new five year goals. The following is an initial analysis of the systems that are implicated in this improvement strategy. Capacity Building: Professional development will focus on teaching strategies that support this higher level of student engagement. Vertical Teams will identify the most effective instructional practices that support the kinds of engagement defined in our “Student Expectations”. The Framework will focus professional development, collaborative activities and staff supervision. Communications: Professional staff will communicate the changing expectations to students, parents and community. Goal Setting and Accountability: School and district development plans will emanate from the new five year goals and EEPD plans will align with these goals. Curriculum: Curricula and assessments will need to be designed to incorporate opportunities for greater student engagement and ownership of the learning process. Leadership: DLC will create new routines that support the collaborative inquiry processes and support teacher development at the classroom level. Training for department leaders, resource teachers and team leaders will develop their capacity for leading collaborative inquiry processes and developing teaching efficacy at the building and district levels. Human Resources: The district will recruit and hire exceptional candidates who possess the dispositions of life-long learners, demonstrate skills for working in teams, are reflective about their practice and have a commitment to student-centered learning. Leadership matters.
4. **Leadership Routines to Support Implementation of the District Theory of Action**

The district theory of action is focused on the improvement of teaching and learning. In recent years, principals and directors have developed into a community of practice through the instructional rounds process and other professional learning experiences. During the 2009-2010 school year, the District Leadership Council developed its own theory of action in order to focus its activities and strengthen the linkages between all aspects of its work to strengthen the organization in support of its priorities. Key elements include:

- develop and communicate a common district vision focused on efficacy, standards, the instructional core and data analysis, and align our leadership work to the vision
- create a leadership community where we use a process of collaborative inquiry to examine everyday problems of practice in an atmosphere of trust and support
- engage in professional learning through reading, writing, dialogue, and shared reflective practice
- agree upon priority initiatives and distribute resources accordingly

Research on effective districts confirms the vital role of continuous learning at all levels of the organization and the establishment of routines that support improvement at the classroom level. The following routines are designed to implement our theory of action:

- Central office support to principal leadership and classroom instructional practices through regular on-site observations of teaching practices.
- DLC application of strategies to provide more regular feedback to teachers based on the “Student Expectations” and “Teacher Expectations” through frequent observations of teaching.
- DLC to conduct data-based case studies.
- DLC to observe the collection and use of data by teacher teams and provide feedback.
- Principals to observe teams, provide feedback and coaching to elevate level of their work.
- DLC to focus instructional rounds on problems of practice based on the Framework for Teaching and Learning.
- Principals to engage teachers in the instructional rounds process and the examination of classroom practices through collaborative inquiry processes, which includes peer observations.
- Teachers regularly engage in the examination of student work, achievement data and classroom instruction as part of the collaborative inquiry process.
- Teaching and learning episodes will be taped and reviewed by faculty, staff and students to determine strengths and needs in relationship to the “Student Expectations” and “Teacher Expectations.”

**Instruction matters.**

5. **Curricular Standards to Align to Board of Education Goals and International Standards.**

Vertical teams and ad hoc committees will engage in the examination of performance assessments and curricular maps to determine whether they require students to demonstrate appropriate levels of thinking and learning skills and engage in activities which raise the level of
responsibility, collaboration and resourcefulness envisioned in our five year goals. They are charged with the task of making recommendations for revising curriculum for the 2011 Summer Curriculum Institute.

Furthermore, the adoption of the Common Core of Learning requires a comprehensive analysis of the alignment of our current standards to those newly adopted at the national and state levels. **Expectations matter.**

6. **Develop and apply criteria and benchmarks for measuring progress on the effectiveness of the district strategy.**

To assist in monitoring the implementation of our improvement strategies, the district employs rubrics to measure progress of the district and schools on a regular basis as a formative assessment tool. The collection and analysis of data aligned to the rubrics prompts discussion and planning for ongoing improvements. Indicators of district progress are currently under development. These indicators are clustered under the following headings: Curriculum and Instruction; Leadership: Goal Setting; Capacity Building; Resource System; Communication System.

This identification of the stages of development of a standards-based system enables the school district to continuously revisit the central improvement strategies and key principles of a standards-led system, monitor progress and development over time, as well as reinforce the core beliefs and expectations of this standards-led system as new staff enter and/or join the leadership in the school system.

The rubrics illustrates a continuum from a state of “Beginning Practice” to “Sustainable Practice”. By using multiple criteria to gauge our growth and development, we can better monitor our progress and focus our improvement efforts.

**Evolving District Priorities**

The emerging themes will sharpen the focus of professional development, team based learning, supervision of instruction and school development planning in the service of improving what goes on in the core. The following chart is not meant to simplify the current state of affairs, but rather to capture the major emphases of the changes in the kinds of work that the district will undertake in the coming years as the system has learned and its Theory of Action evolved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From Learning 1.0</th>
<th>To Learning 2.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System is committed to the development of rigorous content standards, continuous revisions to reflect national and state standards.</td>
<td>Continued commitment to rigorous standards, continuously revised, but with strengthened Stage Three activities that include teaching strategies, which incorporate the principles of learning from the Framework for Teaching and Learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many teachers share exemplars with students, provide opportunities for students to revise work toward standard and provide feedback relevant to standard.</td>
<td>All grading and assessment practices are standards-led, promote student thinking and learning skills, efficacy and responsibility in the learning process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many teachers work together to learn and apply best practices to their classrooms.</td>
<td>Teams of teachers are self-directed and take full responsibility for the direction of their learning, and apply the Framework when they co-construct and design learning tasks that promote student engagement. Teachers innovate, collaborate and problem solve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers engage in professional learning relevant to their classroom practices; teachers learn to guide student learning.</td>
<td>Teachers engage in professional learning focused on increasing the role of the student in the learning process, developing the core competencies, promoting student reflection, choice, increased independence, collaboration and communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most teachers participate in team based activities and professional development, teachers plan together and discuss instruction. Teachers occasionally observe instruction.</td>
<td>Teachers engage in the regular examination of student work and performance data. They apply collaborative inquiry processes regularly. They observe classroom instruction and reflect about the effectiveness of their instruction and make adjustments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and administrators have begun to develop common understanding of quality instruction.</td>
<td>Teachers and administrators regularly examine teaching and learning through application of the Framework to the analysis of instruction, the examination of data and utilize a commonly shared language for describing teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some teacher teams require regular external facilitation to sustain a significant agenda.</td>
<td>Teacher teams are self-managed and focused on the thoughtful use of data to inform instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and administrators participate in activities designed to strength practice and contribute to the improvement of the district.</td>
<td>Teachers and administrators are fully committed to the improvement of all schools and to the district as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLC becomes a community of practice, examining instruction through the rounds process and supporting members through study of a problem of practice.</td>
<td>DLC deepens its collaborative work through the focused investigation of problems of practice related to the Framework for Teaching and Learning, the Core Principles of Learning and student and teacher expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are guided in their learning by teachers. Students will sometimes reflect on their learning and guide the direction of their learning.</td>
<td>Students are active learners, making choices, reflecting on and adjusting their learning behaviors and thinking critically about important content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. STRATEGIC PLANNING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The framework for a standards-based system, the district’s theory of action, core beliefs, and the principles described in this paper lay the foundation for the strategic planning cycle of continuous improvement that is necessary to support our ongoing standards work. As introduced in the first section of this paper, the strategic planning process is a five-year cycle of continuous improvement. It begins with the district vision and mission, which is aligned with the Board Philosophy, Board Policy Goals and Vision of the FPS Graduate. The district’s five year goals and performance standards or indicators align with the board goals. Individual schools create their school development plans that are aligned with and emanate from the district goals. The school development planning process enables annual planning and accountability measures demonstrating progress toward the goals.

Five-Year Framework
1. District Vision and Mission--aligned with Board Philosophy and Board Policy Goals
2. School District Five-Year Goals and Vision of the FPS Graduate with Performance Standards

Annual Planning and Accountability: School Development Plans
3. Superintendent, Administration, and Faculty Goals and Actions which support five-year learning outcome standards through school development plans
   • Staff Accountability and Development
   • Community Support and Commitment
   • Resource Alignment (i.e. facilities, time, money, people, technology)
   • Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment - STANDARDS

Building based plans are then supported by teacher teams in the Educator Evaluation and Professional Development (EEPD) plans, or teacher evaluation plans, that are also aligned with the school and district goals. The school development plans and connected teacher evaluation goals and outcomes help to shape the continuous improvement process. Articulating our standards, implementing those standards, and continuously monitoring our progress, are essential steps to improving district performance and student learning through a standards-based framework. The standards work holds great promise for increasing student achievement by focusing our efforts on important, clearly defined targets and by holding administrators, teachers, students, and parents accountable for results. However, standards alone do not guarantee higher levels of performance from students. We must continue to scan the expectations of the highest performing nations and communities when creating new benchmarks for student learning. We must continue our relentless pursuit of strategies and learning opportunities that will enable all students to master the rigorous, core academic curriculum and the thinking and learning skills
that prepare them for college level study and work readiness. We must continue to provide opportunities for students to use the knowledge and skills they have learned to do important and intellectually challenging work. In this way, our standards work will continually add value to Farmington’s rich educational program.
VII. FARMINGTON’S RATIONALE AND PROCESSES FOR DEVELOPING A STANDARD-LED DISTRICT

The history of innovation and creativity in Farmington is rich and long. Beginning in 1995, administrators made a commitment to developing standards for student learning. They foresaw the need to change the organization in fundamental ways. They transformed the manner in which curriculum was developed, ways in which teacher’s would work together to examine student work, the organization of committees and the processes for strategic planning and continuous improvement. The following ideas and practices remain relevant and applicable to our current systems planning and improvement processes. The following material was written and circulated in 2005 and it contains only minor updated content.

WHY DO WE NEED STANDARDS?

Standards clearly define what is meant by “high levels of learning” for all students.

The district standards are benchmarks for what youngsters in the highest performing school districts and countries in the world can accomplish in core subject areas. Our content standards, including core competencies, are meant to prepare our students to be productive citizens in a rapidly changing world that demands critical thinking, problem solving and communication and collaboration skills. Our standards—and the curriculum experiences leading to those standards—combine a deep understanding of subject matter with the capacity to apply what has been learned in real world situations. They communicate to parents, students, teachers and the community the expectations we hold for student learning.

Standards provide focus for the work of students, teachers and parents.

Farmington standards help our school community understand what students are expected to know and be able to do at each grade level in the core of academic subjects and they provide students, teachers and parents with a clear understanding of the quality of learning we expect as students move along the pathway to high school graduation and productive citizenship. Finally, they serve to coordinate and align the entire school system and its resources on clear educational outcomes.

Farmington standards help students know what is expected of them by providing clear, defined targets and examples of high quality work. The Framework for Teaching and Learning defines the expectations for active student engagement in learning as well as the student role in the learning community. This clarity, combined with support from teachers and parents, fosters the level of perseverance and effort needed for students to meet and exceed our standards. With this information, students can more accurately assess their own performance in relation to the standards and determine what they need to do to meet our expectations for actively engaged learners and what they need to do to ensure that their work meets expectations.

Farmington standards help teachers by providing a focus for teaching, learning and assessment. When teachers are clear about the goals for their students, they can focus their time and energy on helping students improve their work in relation to these goals. In a standards-led school
system, teachers align curriculum, assessment, and instruction to the standards so that teaching time is spent on that which matters most.

Farmington standards provide parents an opportunity to more fully participate in their child's education. When teachers provide parents with clearly defined expectations and models or examples of the work that is expected, parents are better able to understand and support their child's learning and progress at home and in the community.

Our core content performance standards in combination with the indicators for the five year goals provide a framework for understanding the expectations for all students in Farmington. By clearly stating what is expected, students, teachers, and parents alike are more informed and able to support the achievement of these standards. A standards-led school system is supported by a set of fundamental principles.

**SUSTAINING A STANDARDS-LED SCHOOL SYSTEM**

The development of a standards-based school system is built upon indicators of success. These indicators are continuously revisited to assess the progress of the development of the district as a standards-led system. The results of that analysis are used to continue to shape the annual school and district development plans. These indicators are the benchmarks of success of a standards-led school system.

1. **Standards:** Standards are articulated in all content areas, understood by parents, teachers, and students alike, and student achievement is monitored to ensure that all students meet and/or exceed those standards. Standards represent the essential understandings in the discipline and the content knowledge and thinking and learning skills that students need in order to develop an understanding of and ability to apply their understanding of the disciplines.

2. **Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment:** Assessment, curriculum and instruction are responsive to student needs and are aligned with the standards; assessment results drive curriculum and instruction; data on student achievement is used to allocate and align resources and support. Curriculum maps, units and resource guides are developed and aligned with the standards and guide teachers toward resources and activities that support the attainment of rigorous performance standards. These units and guides have common assessments or assessment packages that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understandings. Teachers implement these units and utilize these guides across their grades and content areas, and assess student progress according to standards. Teachers’ instruction is designed and delivered in a variety of ways that engage students actively in constructing their understanding of essential ideas and content, to help all students to achieve the standards. Data—student work and evidence of student progress—are collected to determine student progress toward standard and are used to inform instruction. Students take an active role in self assessment, reflection on learning and goal setting.

3. **Collective Capacity Development:** Professional development is an integral part of the school improvement process, is viewed as a life long process and is appropriately supported. Professional development focuses on the core issues of teaching and learning, it informs
continuous improvement of teaching and learning, fosters collaboration between and among professionals and is embedded in the daily work lives of teachers. Teaming is an essential element of continuous improvement efforts in Farmington

“Teachers possess tremendous knowledge, skill and experience. Collaborative Inquiry creates a structure for them to share that expertise with each other, discover what they are doing that is working and do more of it, and confront what isn’t working and change it….The research base on the link between collaborative learning, reflective practice of teachers and student learning is well established…When teachers engage in collaborative inquiry focused on teaching and learning and make effective use of data, they improve results for students.” (Nancy Love, “Building a High Performance Data Culture”.)

Teaming is a catalyst to bringing improvement efforts to scale. Indicators for the development of powerful instructional teams have become a critical determinate for the effectiveness of our district improvement efforts.

4. **Stakeholders:** All stakeholders in the school community understand, believe, act on, and value Farmington’s standards and thinking and learning skills. They are committed to ongoing improvement; evidence that standards raise student achievement is widely disseminated. Student progress is transparent and actively engages parents in improvement efforts.

5. **Equity:** There is widespread implementation of strategies to address the needs of all learners and achievement gaps are closed; stakeholders support equal access and achievement of a core body of knowledge (standards) as well as thinking and learning skills by all students.

6. **Effort:** Teachers make the standards and thinking and learning skills clear for students and students persevere at difficult tasks until they meet or exceed standards; a standards-led classroom functions like a learning community that support and nurtures students and their success through timely feedback, targeted instruction and interventions and through multiple opportunities for students to meet expectations. It is only through the engagement of strategic student effort that we will achieve our mission for all students.

“Educational institutions could be built around the…assumption that effort actually creates achievement. Our educational system could be designed primarily to foster effort…..five essential features of an effort-oriented education system: 1) clear expectations for achievement, well understood by everyone; 2) fair and credible evaluations of achievement; 3) celebration and payoff for success; 4) as much time as is necessary to meet learning expectations; and 5) expert instruction.” (Lauren Resnick, “From Aptitude to Effort: A New Foundation for Our Schools”, *Daedalus*, 1995.)

**Effort matters.**
How Are Standards Developed?

Farmington standards are developed through a thoughtful process that engages the faculty and administration in examining the “big ideas” and organizing features of a discipline as well as the specific knowledge and skills embraced by that discipline. Standards documents developed at the national and state level were used as resources when designing Farmington's standards.

Our standards reflect what we know about best practice, learning theory and the skills and competencies needed for success in college and work environments. They are critiqued by experts in the field as well as by educators in other high performing districts. By using “critical friends” or experts in the field, such as university faculty, researchers, and practitioners, we ensure that our standards reflect the best thinking in the field. We aim to raise student achievement in Farmington to the levels demonstrated by the best performing countries in the world.

Our standards balance depth and breadth of ideas and incorporate the skills and understanding necessary for success on important tests such as the CMT or CAPT and on international measures of achievement. Farmington standards create a well-articulated pathway for learning as students move from the elementary school through the middle grades and high school. However, the knowledge base of a discipline is dynamic and as such must be continually monitored and revised as necessary to appropriately reflect trends, shifts, or developing knowledge bases or theories. Our standards are continuously revisited in order to remain contemporary and responsive to the field of study, current research, and emerging trends in the discipline.

The first step in developing standards is to identify the essential understandings or "big ideas" or the enduring ideas at the heart of each discipline. The essential understandings, which are derived from the national and state standards, as well as local knowledge and expertise, are the knowledge, skills and understandings that we believe are important for all students to learn as a result of a K-12 education in Farmington. Because they are “essential,” the big ideas have an enduring quality and are likely not to change appreciably over longer periods of time.

Each year, students make progress toward the essential understandings by working toward content standards. Content standards describe what students should know and do at certain intervals such as grade levels or grade level clusters in relation to the essential understandings. They are made explicit through models and examples of student work that represent the standards. These models and examples that meet the standards are called performance standards or benchmark performances.

Curriculum units, curriculum maps and curriculum resource guides are designed by Farmington teachers in a standards-led format. Each of these documents lists the essential understandings and content standards that are the desired outcomes of instruction. When appropriate, unit outcome statements are written to put the larger ideas into the context of a specific unit and describe specifically what a student will understand as a result of the course or unit. Essential questions are written to guide the students’ inquiry and work in the unit. The core knowledge
and skills, or the key facts, concepts, principles, skills and processes that are necessary to help students to reach the desired understandings, are identified. Assessments and learning experiences are then created to align with these standards-based expectations.

Assessments are designed to measure whether or not students have achieved performance standards. They provide evidence of student understanding in relation to the standards and require that students can use their knowledge to perform challenging tasks. These assessments are used to evaluate student progress toward meeting the established content standards. To determine whether or not students have met performance standards generally requires a “body of evidence” or multiple assessments. The evaluation of this progress is recorded in students’ progress reports or report cards.

Learning experiences are developed to ensure that students develop the core competencies and apply their learning skills in order to understand important content, to succeed at challenging assessment tasks and to develop the dispositions of life-long learners. These learning experiences are designed with “the end in mind,” using a “mapping backwards” approach to ensure that students have adequate and varied learning experiences that will allow them to meet the performance standards, communicate and collaborate and reflect on their learning. Mapping backwards means that the first step is to identify what is the desired outcome or what is the essential learning or understanding that we want our students to acquire. When that desired learning is clear, then and only then do we begin to identify both how we will know that students have acquired what we have specified that we want them to learn. Then, we begin to define the learning experiences that students need in order to ensure that they will all reach these standards or expectations, while developing and applying the core competencies defined in the five year goals. These learning experiences are aligned with the standards and prepare students to meet the assessment challenges and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and understandings of the various disciplines. These learning experiences are articulated in curriculum maps written in each discipline. The maps connect the essential understandings, content standards, performance standards, assessments, and learning experiences together.

In other words, essential understandings answer the question, “Why should we study the discipline? Why is this essential to learn?” Content standards answer the question: “What content, knowledge or skills do students need in order to develop their essential understandings of the discipline?” Performance standards clarify for students how well they are doing in relation to the standards. Performance standards answer the question: “How well do students demonstrate their thinking and learning skills and understanding of content? How does it look?” Meeting a performance standard is more than achieving a grade. A performance standard should reflect a specific level of performance that can be characterized by specific qualities, understandings, and application of skills. Performance standards are often described in a rubric or as a body of evidence.

A variety of assessments have been designed to answer the question, “How will students demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do?” The assessment task or tasks prompt students to demonstrate that understanding. The curriculum units, assessments, and guides that Farmington teachers create are designed to help teachers to answer the question of “How do I teach to these standards?” This curriculum development and design work helps teachers to
enable all students to achieve these essential understandings, develop content knowledge, skills, and strategies, and to demonstrate their understanding through performance standards prompted by various assessment tasks.

### Standards and the Essential Questions That They Help to Answer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Answer the question….</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essential Understandings</strong></td>
<td>Why should we study the discipline? Why is this essential to learn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content Standards</strong></td>
<td>What content, knowledge or skills do students need in order to develop their essential understandings of the discipline?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Standards</strong></td>
<td>How well do students demonstrate their thinking and learning skills and understanding of content? How does it look?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessments</strong></td>
<td>How will students demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum Units</strong></td>
<td>How can teachers help students to develop this knowledge, skill and understanding?</td>
</tr>
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The standards and the essential questions that they help to answer form the foundation and the framework for standards development. By seeking to answer these questions, it allows the school district to clarify curriculum expectations at every level. By clarifying expectations for teachers, we simultaneously clarify expectations for students as well, supporting each stakeholder in our standards-led system. Each teacher is then able to explain his/her curriculum expectations, essential understandings, content standards, performance standards, and assessments, allowing for a common set of expectations for student learning.

### IMPLEMENTATION OF STANDARDS ACROSS GRADES AND SCHOOLS

In order to support and strengthen standards-based teaching and learning, teacher and administrator leadership and collaboration are critical. The Farmington Public Schools rely on the concept and structure of distributed leadership. The concept and use of the principles of distributed leadership have been influenced by the work of Dr. Richard Elmore. He writes about distributed leadership in (2000) *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*:

Distributed leadership, then, means multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organization, made coherent through a common culture. It is the “glue” of the common task or goal—instruction—or a common frame of values for how to approach that task—culture—that keeps distributed leadership from becoming another version of loose coupling…” (p. 15).

Important improvements in curriculum, instruction, and assessment are primarily initiated, implemented, and supported by both teacher leaders and school and district administrators. Curriculum development and implementation must be carefully monitored and evaluated to support coherent implementation. To support this effort, collaborative teams are organized at a
variety of levels throughout the schools and the school system to accomplish the work. The following describes the key collaborative teams that support curriculum implementation in Farmington.

**District Leadership Council:**

The District Leadership Council (DLC), under the leadership of the Superintendent of Schools, includes the entire team of school administrators. Together, the administrative team is responsible for developing a coherent and consistent vision for quality instruction, to foster the mission and goals of the Farmington Public Schools. In their collective administrative roles, the team works together to facilitate the development of teacher leadership, expertise, and team functioning. The DLC focuses their work on using data to lead organizational improvement, engaging in the school development planning process for school and district improvement, and focusing on the strengthening and improvement of instruction and curriculum. The team regularly engages in professional development experiences to strengthen their collective knowledge base and to build a community of practice. For example, the DLC conducts “instructional rounds”, spending several hours together in one school, focusing on the development of particular dimensions of instruction, observing and discussing teaching and learning behaviors. The team also examines performance results together and uses those results to inform decision making. Many members of the DLC also lead curriculum vertical teams. The DLC is a critical leadership team that is responsible for leading the many teams that exist both within and between school buildings. Their leadership and their role in developing leadership capacity across the school system, lays the foundation for distributed leadership in a standards-led school system.

**Curriculum Coordinating Council:**

In addition, the Curriculum Coordinating Council is responsible for *districtwide* coordination of curriculum and implementation. The Council includes school administrators, department leaders, and a representative from the Board of Education Curriculum Committee. This Council works with the Assistant Superintendent and Director of Curriculum to ensure that there are opportunities for integration of curriculum across subject areas, and that the district has a long range and systemic plan for curriculum renewal. The Council also monitors the development and implementation of the K-12 subject areas’ standards across grades and subjects and provides feedback to the Assistant Superintendent regarding the structures that support curriculum implementation.

**Curriculum Vertical Teams:**

Curriculum Vertical Teams are K-12 teams designed to accomplish town-wide curriculum coordination and articulation. They are structured to ensure that all schools and key leadership roles are represented and that teachers and administrators alike have a role in making curriculum decisions for their various disciplines. For example, the teams include principals, town-wide reading, writing, and mathematics consultants, resource teachers, department chairs, and representatives from each of the elementary schools. The teams engage in the following work:
• **Analysis of issues** in curriculum implementation: a major function of these teams is to analyze the effectiveness of the implementation of standards-based curriculum through the study of student performance data. The teams identify key issues and needs across the grade levels. The teams prioritize issues and determine whether action needs to be taken or projects initiated. As the result of the adoption of new five year goals, the vertical teams are presented with a charge to review existing curriculum to determine the alignment of current standards, assessments and Stage 3 activities with the Framework and Vision of the Graduate. They are also charged with identifying curriculum that can be strengthened in order to raise the expectations for the application of student learning and thinking skills. The teams may recommend that ad hoc committees be established to accomplish particular tasks. Teams also regularly analyze the standards, work on better aligning standards and curriculum, and assess the implementation.

• **Ad hoc committees** are established to address the issues, challenges, or needs that were identified by the vertical team. This enables the appropriate and key individuals to be involved. Ad hoc committees may have short agendas, such as developing a particular grade level assessment, or may require longer term action, such as an in depth analysis of a particular portion of a program. The purpose is to have a clear focus for the committee’s work and for the committee to accomplish a specific identified task. Ad hoc committees also allow for broader teacher participation depending upon the nature of the issue at hand.

• **Long range planning:** Curriculum vertical teams also identify and develop plans for curriculum revision and implementation. Teams evaluate the standards, examining curriculum alignment issues, balancing of the standards across grades and levels, suggesting revisions to curriculum documents, identifying the need for writing new curriculum, and suggesting needed professional development. It is a cyclical process and as such, curriculum implementation must be constantly monitored and evaluated to ensure appropriate alignment and balance of the curriculum standards. These long range plans provide the template for continued re-visitation of the strength of the standards themselves. The teams monitor the status of curriculum design and development and consider action steps to better strengthen the standards.

**Data and Assessment Committee:**

The Data and Assessment Committee is responsible for **districtwide** coordination and improvement of data use practices in all schools. This new (2010) town-wide committee is comprised of administrators, and teachers representing all schools. The initial charge to the team is:

- to clarify and support Farmington’s guiding beliefs about the role of data in a standards-led system;
- to conduct a survey of data practices in Farmington schools;
- to examine current trends in data use from the professional literature;
- to discuss gaps in current practice by level or school for district improvement purposes;
- to make recommendations for professional development that support thoughtful data use.
**Collaborative Professional Development:**

To effectively implement standards-led curriculum and active learning strategies requires collaborative professional development at each level of the organization. Some key areas include:

- **Developing the leadership capacity to support standards-led curriculum, instruction, assessment and learning.** Administrators are provided with professional development that supports a consistent vision for quality instruction based on the Framework for Teaching and Learning. Through shared learning experiences, such as “instructional rounds”, that is, focused time as a leadership team in one building, observing teaching and learning and developing a common lens for analyzing instruction, administrators develop a coherent set of expectations for teaching and learning. This shared vision is promulgated throughout the school system and becomes reflected in teacher evaluation and supervision through the work of building administration. Moreover, to support the development of leadership capacity, the DLC engages in professional development to focus the skill development of teacher leaders and instructional teams. Since team and collaborative approaches are essential in a standards-led system, time is dedicated to examining how teams function, how to intervene to improve team functioning, and how to maximize team time. DLC members apply these concepts and strategies as they provide feedback. In addition, data and its use is a central focus of professional development for the district wide leadership team. The use of data to inform instructional decision making is then applied across the school system. Professional development time for school administrators is essential to support data use at each level of the organization and forms the foundation of school improvement efforts.

- **Developing teacher understandings of the Framework for Teaching, its Core Principles of Learning, core content standards and the expectations for teachers and students.** To support teacher understanding and application of the Framework, teachers are provided with professional development experiences that help them reflect on teaching behaviors and instructional strategies that lead to improved student engagement, to the application of core competencies and to understanding of important content. They will use faculty and team meeting times to share effective strategies aligned to the principles of learning and the expectations for teachers and students. Teachers also will observe and analyze videotapes of instruction, observe their colleagues and apply the Framework to develop their shared understanding of active learning strategies.

- **Developing teacher understanding of performance assessments and using assessment data to improve teaching and learning for all students.** To further support the implementation of a standards-led curriculum, professional development experiences are provided to help teachers develop strategies for teaching to the core content standards and thinking and learning skills. The assessments that students complete represent student understanding, or lack of understanding. Therefore, professional development experiences are designed to include explorations of the range of assessments that will be used to evaluate student progress. These experiences, such as using a “tuning protocol,” a structured process to examine student work, provide targeted opportunities for teachers to dialogue with one another regarding particular student performances and the challenges...
that these performances present. Teachers examine student work, generated through authentic performance tasks that will cause students to demonstrate their understanding of the essential understandings. Teachers need support for how to implement performance assessments and how to use the results of an assessment to inform instruction. Careful analysis and diagnosis of student understanding, student misunderstanding, and student learning is critical to effective teaching and learning in a standards-led system.

- **Developing teacher understanding of the essential understandings, content standards.** Teachers are provided with opportunities to examine the standards, to consider the content that they teach and what it means to teach toward “big ideas” or the concepts and knowledge that define a specific discipline. Some of these standards require additional professional development in the content to help teachers to strengthen their content knowledge base. For example, a new unit in simple machines for fifth grade teachers may be supported by professional development from an expert in physics to help teachers to develop a knowledge base that enables them to teach the content more fully.

- **Developing teacher understandings of the performance standards and expectations.** The establishment of performance standards requires the development of a collective understanding of the nature of the content standard itself, what it means to meet standard and the core competencies embedded in the learning activities and performance tasks. To accomplish this, teachers are provided opportunities to work together to analyze student work and student progress. Through the use of professional development days, faculty meetings, and team meeting time or common planning time, teachers work together to read and review student work and develop common understandings of the necessary “body of evidence” to determine whether or not students have met our performance standards. These teacher dialogues and explorations of student work are an essential step in developing performance expectations. Likewise, teachers use professional time to study the learning behaviors of students as defined in the Framework’s student expectations so that they can apply similar criteria and maintain consistent expectations for complex learning skills between classrooms. Moreover, this process is iterative as teachers continually build and strengthen their understanding of complex student performances.

- **Holding teachers accountable for standards-led curriculum implementation in Learning 2.0.** Farmington’s Educator Evaluation and Professional Development Plan links teacher evaluation to student achievement. It provides a critical connection between school and district goals, curriculum standards, teaching standards, professional development and School Improvement Plans. Through this teacher evaluation plan, teachers establish collaborative goals based on student performance needs that represent student progress toward rigorous content standards and core competencies. By implementing interventions, monitoring student progress and developing new learning through professional development, Farmington teachers work collaboratively to help all students to meet and achieve Farmington’s standards. This teacher evaluation structure supports the necessary collaboration and professional development experiences, focused
on instruction, assessment, and student learning, that are necessary to be a high performing standards-led school system.

Curriculum Academy:

An annual Summer Curriculum Academy is planned and presented by Farmington teachers, for Farmington teachers, to support the writing and revision of curriculum. This institute allows teachers to work together, using strong models and examples, with highly trained and skilled teachers and coaches. We utilize a backwards mapping process consisting of three stages. Stage 1: develop the enduring understandings, essential questions and knowledge and skills. Stage 2: develop the performance tasks, quizzes, tests, unprompted evidence and self assessments. Stage 3: develop the map of the sequence of learning experiences and instruction. The Vision of the Graduate elevates the course purpose and outcomes defined in Stage 1 to ensure that all students develop the thinking and learning skills articulated in the district five-year goals. The Framework for Teaching and Learning provides the instructional context for the development of the Stage 3 experiences.

Teachers are closely involved in each step of curriculum development and implementation. Maps and units written in the summer institute are taught by teams of teachers who provide critical feedback immediately following instruction, when their reactions and reflections are fresh. The writer uses their feedback to revise the maps during the year and submit their work for additional review by their project coach and department leaders. At the conclusion of this teaching and revision cycle for each curriculum project, the map or unit has been revised systematically by groups of teachers and coaches. Final documents are submitted for approval by the Director of Curriculum and Assistant Superintendent.

A Cycle Of Continuous Improvement

Leaders annually examine specific indictors of progress in the following areas:
- Standards and Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment and Data
- Accountability
- Collective Capacity Development

Through the process of collecting data on student learning and other specific indicators of school and system development, school improvement teams and District Leadership Council members craft school and program development plans in order to promote those practices which support teaching and learning and the attainment of district goals, vision and mission.