

"Our vision is to create a community which works together so all Pasco County students will reach their highest potential."

Pasco's Vision:

A Community of Connected Schools to work towards this vision involves three Guiding Principles and Key Concepts that are used to update the district's strategic plan for designing its schools, programs, and services for students and the community. The articulation of this vision is based on a rationale that includes recent and relevant research on best practices in teaching and learning.

The three fundamental principles in the strategic plan are the concepts of Continuous Progress, Continuity of Caring, and Ensuring Equity and Excellence for students. Continuous Progress enables students to work at a rate that makes the accomplishment of high standards both challenging and achievable, while Continuity of Caring provides programs which meet the full range of academic and developmental needs of all students throughout the pre-kindergarten through adult educational experience. Ensuring Equity and Excellence demands the provision of educational experiences for all students to have the opportunity to achieve high standards regardless of their personal socio-economics status, cultural heritage, cognitive level, or physical ability.

A community of Connected Schools has continued to evolve to embrace the following concepts and characteristics:

- A Continuous Progress system
- Continuity of Caring for all students
- Ensuring Equity and Excellence - high expectations of excellence for all
- A Learner Focus
- A rigorous, integrated, Standards-Driven System of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Organizational Structures that support student learning
- The integration of career preparation into academic programs
- Extended opportunities for learning
- Development of partnerships with parents, businesses, and communities
- Comprehensive programs of professional development
- The use of technology as a tool for learning and productivity

The implementation of the district's vision continues to require significant changes in curriculum documents, instructional practices, and assessment methods, as well as to the organization of schools, grade levels, and classroom grouping strategies. This renewed vision is intended to provide a framework for district and school decision-making that continues to focus on the value of all children, each with his/her own individual needs and capacities to learn in an environment and culture that is committed to the guiding principles of Continuous Progress, Continuity of Caring, and Ensuring Equity and Excellence.

The organizational structure is modified to meet the developmental needs of students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Similarly, at the middle school level, teachers and students are assigned to multiage and multiyear teams, and the curriculum is organized around broad concepts that intentionally capitalize on the interests and needs of early adolescents. These concepts provide an interdisciplinary focus through which teachers plan and integrate instruction. Teacher teams plan integrated units of instruction that address key curriculum standards and that incorporate engaging and relevant projects and other hands on learning activities. Systems are in place to provide a spiraling curriculum with multiple opportunities for students to master key standards from all content areas. Middle School teachers participate in ongoing staff development activities that emphasize this standards-driven curriculum system and research-based instructional strategies.

Expectations for Pasco Graduates

The current research on identifying characteristics of effective schools clearly confirms the essential component of high expectations for all students to achieve. The Pasco County school district concurs with this important finding, and has established challenging expectations and standards for all students.

The three guiding principles provide the framework for Pasco's Vision. They define the key characteristics that schools and school staffs exhibit and embody as they prepare students to graduate and enter the work world and/or post-secondary

the major content areas, but also socially, emotionally, academically, and physically, ready to assume the complex adult roles of the 21st century.

Performance Roles

The academic content areas are a critical source of student standards. These standards address key skills, concepts, and content knowledge—many of which are mandated by state and/or federal legislation. These standards promote cognitive growth through the specific academic areas, and provide the basis for a comprehensive, integrated curriculum. While they are necessary, they are not sufficient for describing the high expectations for all Pasco graduates. The term Performance roles describes the broad goals of the educational program. The district prepares prekindergarden through adult students to assume these performance roles:

Aesthetic Cultivators, Decision Makers, Ethical Responders, Innovators, Knowledgeable Communicators, Relationship Builders, Resourceful Producers, Responsible Citizens, Self Actualizers, World Viewers.

Curriculum Content Area Standards

In addition to integrated performance roles, the district has defined and described standards in each of the content areas that are the basis of the Curriculum Frameworks and that have been aligned with Florida's Sunshine State Standards. Teachers in Pasco County use current world, state, and local events to create a relevant context for the instruction of students in the classroom. The standards, concepts, and skills found in the Pasco County curriculum areas provide the primary source of rigorous content in subject areas: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Music, Health, Physical Education, World Languages, Visual Arts, and Personal/Social Development. As schools begin to implement the guiding principles, they are confronted with the challenge of defining and describing what those guiding principles look like and how they can be implemented. The three guiding principles are further described by three key concepts: Learner Focus, A Standards-Driven System of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Organizational Structure.

Learner Focus

The belief in a learner-focused philosophy is significant to the successful implementation of Continuous Progress in Pasco County schools. The key concept of Learner Focus requires educators to view each child as a unique and capable learner. It means that teachers constantly assess and identify each of their students' current learning needs and abilities, and use this information to make learning and teaching plans. The school staff makes all decisions in the classroom and for the school based on those that help all students reach their highest level of performance—without regard to their socioeconomic level, cultural heritage, cognitive level, or physical abilities.

A Standards-Driven System of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The second key concept that helps to describe and define the Guiding Principles is the district's Standards-Driven System of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. This system for organizing curriculum requires a highly interactive model of planning that integrates curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This critical system is also the basis for teachers' continuous, informed decisions about each student's achievement of high standards. Planning the curriculum, instruction, and assessment system is based on a standards-driven model of identified student expectations (or standards), classroom instruction, and assessments that determine the extent to which students master the standards. Teachers reflect on these three, critical components of curriculum, instruction, and assessment during each phase of the teaching process. As these phases occur—planning for instruction, delivery of instruction, and review/reflection about the instruction—teachers engage in thoughtful analysis. They make a series of evaluative judgments and observations that guide their decisions about the readiness of their students to master the curriculum standards as well as their next steps in teaching.

Organizational Structure

The Organizational Structure of schools, the third key concept that further defines and describes the district's vision, is the physical and environmental evidence of the three guiding principles. When new facilities are designed and built, it is with the intention of providing an optimal, learner-focused environment for students and staff to participate in a Continuous Progress curriculum system within a caring environment and culture. Older facilities are refurbished and redesigned to the extent possible to accommodate the district's vision for all schools. The organizational structure also involves the arrangement of instructional staff. Teams of teachers are assigned to the same groups of students over several years of the students' school experience. These teams are expected to plan and work together to develop and deliver a learner-focused, standards-driven curriculum system. The complete document describes the houses, teams, and Learning Communities in the district's schools

Career Preparation

An important goal of Pasco's Vision: A Community of Connected Schools is to prepare all students to be effective and contributing members of the nation's work force. Upon graduation, each student is prepared to pursue further academic education, career training, and/or enter directly into the work force with all the basic competencies required for success. Career education is infused into the educational program throughout students' school experiences.

Opportunities for Learning

In order to better meet the diverse individual needs of students, access to educational experiences occurs at a variety of locations and times. Flexible school schedules, a balanced school year calendar, adult education, and extended day or after-school programs are available for students.

Parent, Business, and Community Partnerships

Partnerships between schools, parents, businesses, and communities are essential to the successful implementation of Pasco's Vision. Both schools and partners benefit from cooperative endeavors by sharing resources that promote learning and school improvement. These relationships assist in solving problems shared by both the community and the schools. There are numerous volunteer opportunities for parents, business partners, and community members throughout the schools. Volunteering and partnerships are viewed as an investment in the future growth of the Pasco County community. Engaging the diverse parent population, business, professional, post-secondary educational, retiree, and civic organizations in the work of the district's schools is critical and provides a vital focus for the district's overall vision.

Professional Development

Pasco County professional development program is a continuous, flexible process that establishes lifelong learning as a valued expectation for all staff. Staff members participate in professional development that supports innovative, effective, and efficient strategies focused on specific work requirements, successful teaching practices, and/or leadership behaviors. Continuous, ongoing professional development of all staff members positively impacts student performance and organizational growth. It also promotes effective internal and external communication strategies and develops a sense of district pride.

Technology

Technology provides the critical infrastructure to support the educational environment for students by stimulating instruction, providing creative learning experiences and increasing opportunities for student learning. Technological support provides the flexibility needed to meet individual students' needs as well as to provide alternatives for students to meet requirements for graduation. It is also an important productivity tool for students, teachers, and administrators.

Summary

As the District School Board of Pasco County continues its ambitious and studied approach to long-term strategic planning, it remains committed to the individual value of each student. This comprehensive vision of engaging family, community, and school stakeholders in the process of designing schools will address the complex needs and adult roles of the 21st Century.

Program Philosophy

Pasco's philosophy is found in its vision statement. Pasco's Vision: A Community of Connected Schools to create a community which works together so all Pasco students will reach their highest potential. Each student will be cared for and taught to maximize their cognitive, academic, social/emotional, and moral development. The student will become adequately equipped with the skills necessary to be successful members of the community and work force. The guiding principles and key concepts, the curriculum content area standards, and the organizational structure all come together to focus on each learner. They are the theoretical under