



OUR THEORY OF ACTION

Theory of Action

Our theory of action is Managed Instruction. We believe that every action we take contributes to learning. Using Managed Instruction, we are designing and aligning our systems to create and support student learning. This includes board policies, budget development, curricula, interventions, assessments, professional development, student data, and human resources practices. We believe that comprehensive and aligned systems will support a culture of learning.

Our theory of action builds on our beliefs about how children learn, the conditions that best promote learning, and the policies, management systems, and culture that best promote the commitment and high performance of adults. It also rests on our knowledge of the history and current state of urban education in the United States and the unique circumstances in Elizabeth Public Schools and the communities it serves. Finally, our theory of action springs from our commitment to American democracy and our beliefs about how democratic institutions should interact with and serve the people who own them.

Managed Instruction is a comprehensive theory of action that embraces many partial theories of action, including adequate resources, effective management, small learning communities, highly qualified teachers, pre-kindergarten, and more. At its heart is our belief that Elizabeth Public Schools must be re-designed to directly manage its core business, teaching and learning, in the most effective way possible.

In accordance with our theory of action, Elizabeth Public Schools must create a comprehensive instructional management system. This begins with content standards, performance standards, assessments, and consequences, which are provided by the state accountability system in alignment with federal law. Building on this foundation, the essential elements of Managed Instruction are a comprehensive and aligned district curriculum, professional development around the curriculum, a comprehensive student information system, formative and summative assessments, and carefully calibrated and appropriate interventions by child, by teacher, by subject, and by school. All other district systems—budget, financial management, human resources management, etc.—must be aligned to support the instructional management system. And using the best change management techniques, district leadership needs to build a new district culture that embraces Managed Instruction.

“Our theory of action builds on our beliefs about how children learn, the conditions that best promote learning, and the policies, management systems, and culture that best promote the commitment and high performance of adults.”

Our theory of action, Managed Instruction, consists of the following seven elements:

1. Elizabeth Public Schools must have a district **curriculum** that covers pre-kindergarten, every subject for every grade in elementary school and every course in middle and high school. The curriculum must be coherent, aligned, and detailed down to individual lesson plans, teaching materials, and sample assessments, all of which must be available to teachers for easy and timely access.
2. To teach this curriculum, Elizabeth Public Schools must maintain a **workforce** of effective instructional leaders and teachers. Human resource policies, structures, and practices must support this objective.
3. Elizabeth Public Schools must put into place a comprehensive **professional development** system that centers on the curriculum and effective ways to teach it, based on the best evidence-based research. This system may include curriculum coaches in the schools, daily monitoring (including observation) of teaching, and just-in-time professional development to support teaching in the classroom.
4. Periodic **formative and summative assessments** of student achievement must be conducted, and the results must be disaggregated by classroom, subject, ethnicity, gender, poverty level, teacher, or in any other way useful to drive continuous improvement.
5. The establishment of a **comprehensive student information system** will be required.
6. **Interventions** by child, by teacher, by subject, and by school must be carefully calibrated, appropriate, and timely.
7. Elizabeth Public Schools must put into place an **accountability system** that holds people responsible for meeting standards, changing behavior, and delivering excellent results. The accountability system, for schools and other functional units, must identify important performance indicators, measure performance using these indicators, collect and distribute performance data, and apply predetermined consequences (rankings, rewards, sanctions, and/or interventions) for achieving predefined outcomes.

To further clarify our intent, we wish to make clear that Managed Instruction is not necessarily managed pedagogy. Our intention is that teachers be given maximum freedom to teach according to their teaching style and best professional judgment, consistent with high levels of student mastery of the district curriculum. Consistent with this intent, management will, as needed, prescribe required professional development, monitor, assess, issue directives regarding professional practice, and intervene.

Establishing and operating an effective instructional management system is not simply making the current system work better. It is a fundamental change from a loosely coupled to a tightly integrated instructional system. The roles and responsibilities of nearly every adult and nearly every process related to instruction will need to change.

It is the intention of the Elizabeth Board of Education that Managed Instruction as a theory of action for change provides a stable, long-term framework for improving student achievement in Elizabeth Public Schools.