

Appendix A: Description of Instructional Practices Template

Please provide a short description of how the school defines high-quality instruction and a description of what instructional practices, behavioral expectations, and types of accommodations the Department review team should expect to see during the renewal site visit.

At RCCS, high-quality teaching is defined as delivering rigorous, standards-based instruction tailored to the diverse needs of all scholars, creating an inclusive, engaging classroom environment. This approach is rooted in the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which guides our educators in planning purposeful lessons, using data-driven strategies, and fostering student engagement through interactive and student-centered activities. RCCS has a rich, rigorous curriculum for each subject that provides scholars with the necessary skills and learning experiences needed for sustained academic achievement. The curriculum is fully aligned with the NJSLS for English Language Arts, Literacy and Mathematics.

Teachers differentiate instruction by leveraging formative and summative assessments to provide personalized support, ensuring all scholars are challenged and supported. Active learning is encouraged through project-based and inquiry-driven activities, promoting student ownership of their learning. Classroom management is structured and positive, grounded in the Responsive Classroom Approach, where respect, cooperation, and responsibility are central. Effective use of technology enhances learning, providing personalized experiences and enriching the educational process. Continuous professional growth is a hallmark of our teaching staff, who engage in ongoing reflection and development to refine their instructional practices. RCCS believes learning should be fun and engaging for students and include a clear teaching point and lesson structure. RCCS defines high quality instruction based on several components of a teacher's workflow. High quality begins with high, college-bound expectations that will be met by teaching the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and preparing all scholars to exceed grade level expectations on the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLSA). High quality instruction incorporates summative and formative assessments as well as the use of the data each assessment yields to drive lesson planning and instruction which will result in greater student achievement. Additionally, high quality instruction engages students in the reading, discussion and completion of tasks based on the use of high quality, grade level texts that allow scholars to demonstrate their acquisition of knowledge / skills as it relates to each standard. The use of exemplar texts / demos as models is important for the scholars to understand what the goal of their learning is and is also important for teachers as they move into the next component, identifying the anticipated struggle of scholars.

Another component of high-quality instruction is the planning and preparation of task-dependent scaffolds which will allow all scholars to produce an exemplary work product. We believe that all instruction should involve frequent checks for understanding and time for reteaching scholars individually, in small groups, or as a whole class. RCCS believes learning should be fun and engaging for students and include clear teaching points (objectives) and lesson structure. Students are encouraged to be active participants in their learning and parents are expected to participate in their child's education.

In summary, high-quality teaching at RCCS is a comprehensive, reflective practice that combines academic rigor, differentiated support, and a positive learning environment, all guided by the principles of the Danielson Framework.

Instructional Practices

Guiding Questions:

- What should the team see in classrooms that will let them know what students are expected to learn?
- What should the team see in classrooms that will let them know what students are learning?
- What will teachers be doing that will demonstrate that they are implementing the school's instructional model?

- How does the school define high-quality teaching and what should high-quality teaching look like in the classroom?

School's Description:

What should the team see in classrooms that will let them know what students are expected to learn?

When a team is evaluating classrooms at RCCS to understand what scholars are expected to learn, they should look for several key indicators such as learning objectives, standard aligned instruction, appropriate instructional materials, exemplars (i.e. writing, math problem solving strategies, anchor charts, promoting accountable talk), and teacher language. Learning objectives would let the team know that the aim and purpose of the lesson is posted and visible and easy for scholars to reference and understand. Standard aligned instruction would be evident by the team through readily available lesson plans that demonstrate its connectedness to that NJSLS.

In classrooms, the team would see instructional materials that support lesson aims and purposes. The instructional materials would include but are not limited to standard aligned curriculum (teacher and student), and access to supporting technology. The team would observe teacher language used to communicate learning expectations to students. This communication would convey evidence of how teachers communicate learning expectations to students. This could include verbal instructions, written feedback, or individual goal-setting meetings.

What should the team see in classrooms that will let them know what students are learning?

When the team walks into classrooms at RCCS, there are several key indicators they can look and see to gauge and confirm what students are learning. Learning objectives, student engagement and discourse, formative assessments and the classroom environment are indicators that you will see when in classrooms at RCCS. The learning objectives and/or goals are clearly displayed. The lesson aims and purposes are clearly defined in a way that supports scholars with being aware of what they are expected to learn. The lesson objectives are consistently updated and align with the learning and activities happening within the classrooms and learning spaces. Student engagement and discourse is another key indicator of what the team would see in classrooms that will let them know what students are learning. Students actively participate in the lessons. This participation looks like asking and answering questions that articulate their understanding. This participation includes students working together collaboratively and discussing ideas. Students are engaging at high levels to demonstrate their involvement in the learning process. Formative assessments are also mentioned when determining what the team would see in classrooms at RCCS. Formative assessments in the classrooms like exit tickets, quizzes, or quick checks for understanding. These assessment types allow for teachers to use this information to demonstrate flexibility in their instruction and an informed responsiveness to their students. At RCCS, the classroom environment will let the team know what students are learning. The classrooms are organized in a way that supports learning. The classroom environments encourage collaboration and student discourse. The classroom environment has learning resources and instructional materials readily available for implementation. The classroom environment has samples of student work on display. The student work displays provide insight into what students are learning, have learned, and how they are applying their knowledge.

Learning objectives, student engagement and discourse, formative assessments and the classroom environment are a few key indicators that the team will see when in classrooms at RCCS. By looking at these indicators, the team can get a comprehensive view of what students are learning and how effectively the instruction is being delivered.

What will teachers be doing that will demonstrate that they are implementing the school's instructional model?

At RCCS, our teachers consistently implement our instructional model through a combination of intentional, evidence-based practices and a nurturing approach that fosters both academic and social-emotional growth.

Central to our approach is the use of the Responsive Classroom methodology, which emphasizes the importance of creating a safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environment. This approach ensures that scholars not only achieve academic success but also develop essential social skills that contribute to their overall well-being.

Instruction is standards-aligned, with lessons designed to meet state and national benchmarks while being responsive to the unique needs of our scholars. Differentiation is a key practice, with teachers leveraging data from various assessments to tailor instruction, providing small group support and individualized learning experiences that challenge each scholar appropriately. In grades K-2, the presence of instructional assistants in the classroom further enhances this personalized approach, allowing for more targeted support and attention to individual student needs. Our commitment to data-driven instruction is evident as educators regularly analyze student performance to refine their teaching strategies and address learning gaps. The use of best instructional practices, including the gradual release of responsibility, cooperative learning, and higher-order questioning, helps scholars build their knowledge and skills progressively. The learning environment remains student-centered, with project-based learning, inquiry-based activities, and opportunities for student voice and choice being integral to our instructional model. Classroom management is rooted in the principles of the Responsive Classroom, where teachers create structured, positive environments that promote academic engagement and minimize disruptions. Professional development is ongoing, with teachers continually enhancing their instructional techniques and aligning them with the school's model. Reflection, self-assessment, and peer observations are embedded in our professional culture, driving continuous improvement.

Technology integration supports our instructional goals, with digital tools and blended learning models enriching the educational experience. Collaboration is essential at RCCS, as teachers work closely with colleagues, support staff, and families to ensure a cohesive approach to instruction and student support. Regular communication with families about student progress and strategies for at-home learning strengthens this partnership. Through these comprehensive practices, our teachers exemplify the high standards of RCCS's instructional model, creating a thriving academic environment where scholars excel both academically and socially.

Behavioral Expectations

Guiding Questions:

- What is expected of students in terms of behavior?
- What interventions should the team expect to see if behavioral expectations are not met?
- What might observers see teachers doing to encourage students to meet the behavioral expectations?

School's Description:

What is expected of students in terms of behavior?

At RCCS, we expect our scholars to demonstrate the CHEER values of Collaboration, Honesty, Excellence, Effort & Respect through practices and behaviors that align with our Code of Conduct and the taught "Bucket-Filling" philosophy.

What interventions should the team expect to see if behavioral expectations are not met?

Our school has RCCS Discipline Guidelines that provide a framework for tiered consequences when students' behaviors are not aligned with set expectations. These Discipline Guidelines are shared with the school community to ensure a common understanding and alignment regarding how the community addresses instances of misconduct. We have a certified BCBA School Behaviorist which 5 years ago took the place of the school's Dean of Discipline to shift the culture from one where we gave consequences for the behavior(s) that most likely were barriers to learning and socially inappropriate, to one where the function of the behavior was identified and then replaced with a more socially appropriate, functional behavior that would best allow access to learning. The School Social Worker facilitates our Peer Leadership program and facilitates "Lunch Bunch"

social skills groups as a proactive way to help teach our student problem-solving skills and conflict resolution techniques. When behavioral expectations are not met, after the discipline guidelines are followed as appropriate based on individualized factors, interventions such as social skills groups and peer leaders programming, are introduced to reduce the probability of recurrences.

What might observers see teachers doing to encourage students to meet the behavioral expectations?

Responsive Classroom practices are seamlessly integrated into our daily routines, creating a positive and supportive learning environment. Each day begins with a Morning Meeting, where scholars and teachers gather to foster a strong sense of community. This time is used for greetings, sharing, and participating in activities that set a constructive tone for the day. The morning message outlines the day's schedule and reinforces key concepts, helping scholars feel prepared and engaged. Our approach to classroom management emphasizes the establishment of clear behavioral expectations, which are consistently reinforced. We focus on positive reinforcement, celebrating scholars' successes, and providing constructive feedback to guide their growth. This method not only helps maintain a respectful and orderly classroom but also encourages scholars to take pride in their achievements and progress. When conflicts arise, we employ collaborative problem-solving techniques that involve scholars in finding solutions. This approach helps scholars develop a sense of responsibility and teamwork, as they actively participate in resolving issues. It also promotes a collaborative classroom atmosphere where scholars learn to work together effectively. Classroom expectations are clearly listed and visible. In situations where individualized programming is necessary, the team may see individualized behavior management plans being implemented.

Accommodations

Guiding Questions:

- What might the team see in classrooms to show that the school is supporting students with diverse learning needs?
- Describe the continuum of services offered to students needing accommodations or modifications.
- How might the team know teachers are implementing IEP accommodations?
- How are teachers expected to deliver ESL instruction in the relevant classrooms?

School's Description:

What might the team see in classrooms to show that the school is supporting students with diverse learning needs?

At RCCS, we address the needs of the whole child and are committed to our foundational belief that all children can learn if provided with a nurturing, accepting environment coupled with resources to provide necessary support. Curriculum across subjects include recommended lessons to differentiate instruction, team meetings focus on the use of data to drive lesson planning and lesson plan template is conducive to planning targeted lessons. Within the classroom, this should translate into seeing small group instruction following a whole group mini lesson. Small groups should be ability-aligned based on prior data, as well as mini-lesson observations and data collection. All classrooms should have *exemplar anchor charts* and be rich in language presentation accessible to all learners including multilingual learners (i.e. Word Walls, vocabulary word lists, signage, etc.). Modifications to lessons and materials through collaboration with the special education teacher as aligned with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and specific accommodations may not be obvious to the onlooker as our school uses a collaborative model for how our learners with IEPs are served and as much as possible, our learners with IEPs are integrated into general education settings, while maintaining compliance with their IEP. All classrooms promote the use of Responsive Classroom strategies and the Bucket-Filling philosophy so you will see a "calm down" down area and a yellow bucket to remind learners of behavioral expectations and as positive reinforcement / reminder.

Describe the continuum of services offered to students needing accommodations or modifications.

RCCS creates programs to address the needs of our students rather than making our students with special needs conform to the programs that exist. We work to assist students in need of accommodations or

modifications in being able to learn within the least restrictive environment, providing support as needed. Thus, you might see an additional staff member within certain classrooms who are there as 1:1 support for a student as an accommodation per their IEP. Occupational services, physical therapy services and speech therapy services are offered per IEPs on-site for students classified under Special Education as per their IEP. RCCS has a self-contained (LLD) classroom which was created in the SY 2019-2020 to address the needs of students enrolled at the time. We have a full on-site CST which did not exist before SY 2019-2020, led by a certified School Psychologist. We also offer pull-out replacement (resource room) instruction in ELA and Math, as well as In-Class Support. Program recommendations are determined by the CST using data collected through the evaluation process, assessment data, classroom observations, and feedback from the teachers / parents. Prior to a student being recommended through the Intervention & Referral Services Committee for a CST evaluation, our school utilized the Response to Intervention tiered approach to provide classroom-based interventions and/or supplemental interventions (ELA / Math).

How might the team know teachers are implementing IEP accommodations?

The team might see an additional person within a classroom who might serve as the 1:1 aide or 2:1 aide on behalf of a student with an IEP that requires this as an accommodation. In addition, the team might see a behavior management plan being implemented. All classrooms have a “calm down” corner for all students to use to reinforce positive behaviors, self-regulation, and to practice strategies taught when students might be feeling overwhelmed or need a break. During small group learning centers to address the varying abilities and learning styles is another time when the team might observe accommodations being implemented.

How are teachers expected to deliver ESL instruction in the relevant classrooms?

RCCS offers a High Intensity ESL push-in/pull-out hybrid program, where students receive 45-minute daily instruction in English with a strong emphasis on Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)-based strategies. Our program strives to meet both the academic and social/emotional needs of our English language learners in both small, intimate group settings that facilitate interaction and dialogue, as well as in whole groups that foster community and integration. ESL lessons include measurable objectives that are aligned to the WIDA MLD Standards, while Common Core State Standards are used to determine unit plan goals and success criteria. Annual program review and evaluation provides an opportunity to revisit the present program model and its effectiveness and to make changes as needed. Within all general education classrooms, teachers are encouraged to integrate multi-language communication through signage, directions being translated when necessary, and collaboration with the ESL teacher. Co-teaching opportunities are built into the ESL Teacher schedule so that, in addition to the daily pull-out ESL lessons which focus on ELA instruction, there are opportunities for the ESL teacher to provide real-time intervention during social studies and science lessons. Collaborative planning is made possible through vertical articulation team meetings and all classroom lesson plans are accessible to ESL teachers and vice versa. We believe that it is important to fully immerse our multilingual learners in the English language while supporting them in their primary language. Our ESL program is innovative not just because we use the research-based SIOP model but because we infuse our Responsive Classroom methods which create an environment of inclusivity. We believe that this is why our multilingual learners make such nice progress and why a lot of our multilingual families feel so supported by our school and why they express feeling comfortable having their children educated at RCCS.