

Dr. Paul Clore, Superintendent

Gregory-Portland Independent School District

Region 2

Enrollment: 4,485

CSCOPE Testimony

Gregory-Portland ISD has used CSCOPE as its curriculum framework since 2006, through Region 2 Service Center and the Texas Education Service Center Collaborative. As an early adopter, the district experienced the typical growing pains new software and internet systems experience as they grow into maturity. The district began the implementation process by sticking its toe in the water to test the system out without mandating it. As our teachers used it and learned it, curriculum specialists met with teachers to get feedback on what worked and what needed to be refined. This information was fed back through our local service center to the state developmental team which brought about refinements to the system over time. At the same time, district curriculum specialists and the teachers using the system evaluated and refined local user standards over time to ensure fidelity with state standards, while creating balance between curriculum demands and instructional autonomy for teachers. District leaders understood that teacher experience and commitment and sufficient time for implementation were the key ingredients essential for successful implementation. District leaders understood that without voluntary teacher buy-in and in-depth understanding of the difference between state curriculum mandates and instructional prerogative, the implementation would not be successful.

What is Curriculum?

In the beginning, through staff development, district teachers first worked through defining for themselves and the district what elements within the system could be negotiable and what would be non-negotiable for CSCOPE success to occur. They understood that without clear acceptance and communication of these elements they refined for themselves, teachers would experience frustration because of unnecessary misinterpretations in applying the curricular elements of CSCOPE. In-depth teacher training, facilitated planning, and continuous teacher feedback were essential to moving towards implementation of CSCOPE as a viable curriculum. There are three essential components to implementation of any curriculum, and CSCOPE plays a role in each in our district:

1) Instructional Objectives:

The state mandates that student instruction derive from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for all grade levels offered in public schools. To do so, G-PISD uses CSCOPE to provide staff the "what and when" or scope and sequence of the curriculum. CSCOPE defines for staff depth and breadth of instructional standards, essentially creating a focus for how fast, how far, and how deep each standard should be taught. The vertical alignment and continuity that CSCOPE provides our district and teachers is invaluable. Content specialists who write CSCOPE components bundle student expectations in a way that is meaningful and manageable for teachers, allowing them to focus on what is truly important and imperative for students to master. The actual true gift of CSCOPE is the specificity of the standards it provides, since state-mandated TEKS are often vague which, by themselves, could lead to wide interpretation among teachers. CSCOPE provides clarity that is valuable for teachers in the planning process.

2) Educational Experiences:

In G-PISD, as in any school district, the best curriculum and resources can become meaningless if they do not translate to effective instruction in the classroom. We believe teachers need to be supported, but not scripted, in how they teach students. Through CSCOPE Exemplar Lessons, teachers choose what they will use and not use for instruction. Teacher discretion determines instruction, not district mandate. Teachers are encouraged to review available lessons and resource materials for ideas and support, but are not required to be slaves to lesson content. Over time, we have found in G-PISD that many teachers have adopted part, and many times all, of each provided CSCOPE lesson for use in instruction, although they are not required to do so. Teachers in our district see the benefit of gleaning ideas from specialists in their field. In G-PISD, curriculum ends at the Instructional Focus Document, which is the bridge CSCOPE provides between curriculum and instruction. Our teachers walk to the middle of the bridge, but retain the freedom to choose whether to cross over into CSCOPE instruction or not.

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