

better IDEA

BetterIDEA is IDEA Public Schools instructional strategy designed to accelerate learning. There are two components to BetterIDEA, a new curriculum powered by Direct Instruction, and individualized instruction. The goal of BetterIDEA is to ensure that all students are on or above grade level in reading, language, spelling, and math – and ultimately graduate elementary school ready for 7th grade level work.

OUR CORE CURRICULUM

Our core curriculum is an explicit, intensive instructional method that allows students of all abilities to become confident, capable learners. This model, which is backed by more than 40 years of research, is based on the theory that by teaching to mastery, teachers can accelerate learning for students. Reading Mastery, Language, Spelling Mastery and Connecting Math Concepts are the core programs implemented within our K-5 classrooms.

Students are placed in flexible, homogeneous groups in reading, language, spelling and math, and are expected to score 85-90% or higher on daily independent work and weekly assessments. Skills are taught and scaffold along the way so that 85% of each lesson reviews previously taught skills and 15% of instruction introduces new skills. Students advance through the program only if they have demonstrated mastery of the concepts taught and assessed. Students who show exceptional progress can fast-cycle through lessons, and sometime entire programs if they show consistent mastery on independent work as well as assessments, which are administered every 5 to 10 lessons.

READING MASTERY, LANGUAGE, AND SPELLING MASTERY

Our ELA curriculum, focuses on the learning to read concept in grades K-1, reading to learn concept in grades 2-3, and higher levels of comprehension and rigor in grades 4-5. The Reading Mastery Signatures Edition has been proven to help students decode and comprehend through scaffolded lessons, explicit, systematic teaching, and addresses all five essential components of Reading, phonemic awareness, phonics and word analysis, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Spelling Mastery is also taught daily to ensure students are making the connections between decoding and spelling patterns.

CONNECTING MATH CONCEPTS

Connecting Math Concepts is a math program for K-5 students, which provides a solid conceptual framework in which students are introduced to new skills by connecting them to previously taught skills. CMC explicitly teaches strategies to students through thorough explanation, guided practice and independent practice. Through

meticulous data collection, teachers are able to identify the moment students have a misunderstanding, or are ready for advancement.

SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Both science and social studies will be taught at least 30 minutes a day, focusing on teaching grade level Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) throughout grades K-5. Both contents will incorporate the grade level skills every child must know by the time advancing to the next grade level.

iLEARNING HOT SPOT

The iLearning Hotspot helps students learn at their own pace and practice foundational math skills until mastered. There is a one-to-one student to computer ratio in this environment. All students cycle through this lab at least three times a week for 45 minutes each time.

The software used by students is adaptive, meaning it uses algorithms to develop and customize an individualized learning path for each student. Students in grades Kinder-3rd use Dreambox and students in grades 4th-5th use Reasoning Minds. Data pulled from the software will help drive intervention in the math classroom, as it provides teachers with valuable information of students' strengths and weaknesses.

The iLearning Hot Spot teacher is able to create login and passwords as requested, as these software programs are web-based and are available for home use if desired.

ACCELERATED READING ZONE

Under BetterIDEA time is carved for students to read independently in the Accelerated Reading Zone. We know that the more time a student spends actively reading a book at his or her instructional level, their literacy and critical thinking skills are developed and improved, and ultimately making better readers.

In the Accelerated Reading Zone, students will choose from a selection of books. They will read in the lab and take software-based Accelerated Reader exams. The reading lab manager will help students set goals around their reading level; teachers will determine the percentage of questions students should be answering correctly on AR exams and the quantity of reading they should have completed by a specified time. The students will be competing around each of those metrics as individuals and as a class, with the ultimate goal of increasing independent reading levels.