

The Performance-Based System, FAQs

The Lindsay Unified School District has developed and formally adopted a guaranteed and viable student-centered curriculum that is based on the California state standards, aligned to the state assessment blueprints, and organized into units of study referred to as “measurement topics.” The development of the measurement topics was completed under the direct guidance of Dr. Robert Marzano and has undergone several revisions since it was first piloted during the 2008-2009 school year. The purpose of such a curriculum is to ensure there is focused and strategic instruction across the district on specific areas of knowledge and skills, and to assess such learning in a manner that guarantees every learner will master the desired knowledge or skills. The system of a guaranteed and viable curriculum organized in a measurement topic format provides a vehicle for learning facilitators to keep track of the progress of individual learners on each MT using learning facilitator-designed formal and informal assessments as well as district summative assessments. To these ends a set of K –12 measurement topics have been designed in ELD, math, language arts, science and social studies, as well as in all 9th-12th grade elective courses. The specific knowledge and skills contained in the measurement topic learning targets is the guaranteed and viable curriculum for learners in the Lindsay Unified School District

1. What is performance-based education?

Performance-based education is a comprehensive approach to learning in which the entire educational system is organized around engaging students in developing 21st century skills while having them work at their performance level and advancing through the learning only when they have demonstrated proficiency of the required knowledge or skills.

2. Why did LUSD convert to a performance-based system?

LUSD moved to the performance-based system essentially because the traditional educational system was failing far too many learners. There are many reasons for the failure, but one crucial aspect is related to the fact that many learners do not take ownership of their learning and/or fully engage in the educational system. Our learners must be ready to compete in a global society when they graduate from LUSD. The performance-based approach is designed to meet all the needs of our learners through rigor, relationships, relevance, and helping learners to take responsibility for their own learning. We need to ensure that our learners, staff, parents, and community understand what is expected of our learners at each content level and the criteria to achieve proficiency on each standard at each level. We are creating a system in which the students partner with their teachers to reach that proficiency.

3. Why is a performance-based system good for learners?

When we began this journey, we faced the brutal facts that many of our learners were not engaged in their learning, they were not learning the required content, they were not being held accountable for the standards taught at each grade level. We needed to focus our efforts on providing a relevant curriculum, giving learners more ownership of their learning, and allow them the time and structure to attain mastery.

4. When did LUSD decide to develop a performance-based educational system?

After many years of low academic performance throughout the district and after many years of implementing various practices, programs, and reforms, the Board of Education for the Lindsay Unified School District adopted the District Strategic Design. The adoption of the Strategic Design in July 2007 was a crucial turning point for the district as it established the Mission, Core Value, Guiding Principle Vision, and LLL's for the LUSD community. The Strategic Design implementation essentially became the mandate from the local Board of Education to develop a performance-based system, which would ensure academic and social success of all learners.

5. What is the timeline for this implementation?

All schools and grade levels (K-12) have become involved in teaching the MT content, scoring as noted above, and reporting out progress on the 0-4 scale in the fall of 2009. However, the full implementation of all aspects of a performance-based system began with the freshman learners in August 2009. In the 2010/2011 school year, the system expanded to include all learners in grades 7-10. In the fall of 2011, all elementary schools will become K-8 schools and begin full implementation of all aspects of the performance-based system.

6. What are the components of a performance-based system?

A performance-based system is a system, which focuses on the individual student to ensure he/she learns what he/she should learn. The system is flexible to allow students to learn at their own rate in order to meet all required educational standards. In LUSD, the expected rate is that the learners will learn at the teacher-pace or faster. For learners who are not progressing at that rate, we will provide intensive corrective instruction. LUSD has chosen to follow the model developed by the Reinventing Schools Coalition, which included the following components: Leadership, Shared Vision, Standards Based Education, and Continuous Improvement.

7. Is every school in LUSD performance-based?

Yes. All schools are performance-based. In the 2010-2011 school year, all learners in grades 7-10 were fully implemented into the performance-based system. In the 2011-2012 school year, all grades K-12 were fully implemented into the performance-based system.

8. How will this system be adjusted in the future?

One of the key components of a performance-based system being implemented in LUSD is one of continuous improvement. In order to effectively respond to the needs of our learners and National or local reform efforts, LUSD will constantly check and adjust the policies and practices guiding the performance based system.

9. Why would you change our system for high achievers when the old one is working for them?

We currently have very few students who score "advanced" on the state administered California Standards Test (CST). A performance-based system requires learners to take ownership of their learning and progress through the system in a manner that is appropriate for them. Learners, who move through the system more quickly, will be able to take advantage of post-secondary options such as college coursework while still in high school.

10. What will happen with the system when the common core standards are implemented?

When the common core standards are fully implemented at the state and national level, Lindsay Unified will ensure that our Measurement Topics and Assessments are aligned to the Common Core Standards.

Curriculum and Instruction

1. Has the curriculum that my child will learn changed?

The curriculum has not changed; it is just organized differently and monitored much more effectively. All learners are required to demonstrate proficiency (defined as level 3 knowledge) in a rigorous curriculum that is based on the California State Standards. This curriculum is organized into units of study referred to as Measurement Topics (MT's). The MT's are composed of multiple learning targets that are standards-based and organized into simple and complex knowledge. Student learning is assessed and reported out at the learning target level and the MT level. The minimum level of proficiency in LUSD is referred to as "level 3 knowledge" on the curriculum rubrics.

2. What is meant by content level?

The term "content level" defines the skills and knowledge a learner is learning at a particular time in a given content area. Parents can see the progression of the skills and knowledge that learners have already mastered (the previous level), and what they will be working on next (the next higher level). In LUSD, there are 13 content levels.

3. How will teaching look different?

When you observe in a performance-based classroom you will still see research-based best practices in teaching. Teachers will engage learners in whole group, small group, and individual instruction. The big difference will be that learners will be given more responsibility for their own learning. Learners will be given a voice in the decisions of the classroom through the shared vision, the code of conduct and various other tools and processes. Learners will move through content only after showing proficiency. The learner will take a district assessment to demonstrate that they are proficient on a particular measurement topic.

4. How are learners going to know that they have met proficiency on required learning target?

Teachers and learners will develop assignments and assessments in order to show proficiency on the learning targets. Learners will know what they need to know and be able to do before beginning any test, project, or assignment. Any learner not attaining level 3 knowledge will receive corrective instruction and support until level 3 knowledge is attained. Failure is not an option.

5. How often will learners move to the next content level?

Learners will move to the next content level when they demonstrate level 3 knowledge on all learning targets contained in their current content level. Learners may move anytime during the school year. They do not need to wait until the next school year to move to the next content level.

6. What is in place to assist learners who are having trouble moving up to the next content level?

Each school site provides interventions for learners who are not succeeding in a particular content level. We currently have teachers who support learners with special education needs, English language learning needs, reading and writing needs, and social studies and science needs through various intervention programs offered before, during, or after school, and on vacation days and weekends.

7. How does this system affect my child if they are not making progress?

The performance-based system is the best environment for a child who is struggling to make progress. In this system, learning is continuously monitored, allowing for quick adjustments that could include differentiating instruction, interventions, and personalized learning plans. These quick adjustments will ensure that your child does make progress and will receive the services he/she needs to advance.

8. What does special education support look like?

The current inclusive Special Education model used in LUSD will not be affected by the transition to a performance-based system. Learners will continue to learn based on the goals on their IEPs and standards will be accommodated or modified based on those goals.

9. What is the purpose of re-grouping and how are learners identified for re-grouping?

The purpose of regrouping is to meet learners at their instructional levels to ensure academic growth/ progress. Learners are identified for regrouping based on data-driven decisions to ensure optimal placement. Data sources may include measurements topic assessments, learning facilitator activities or assessments, performance-based tasks, and state testing.

10. It seems impossible that a teacher can teach a class with everyone at a different place. How do I know my student is really going to learn in that situation?

In a performance-based model, all learners are grouped together according to academic need. Performance-based classrooms will often require far less differentiation than the traditional model because learners will be much more homogeneous with regard to academic performance level and need.

11. How do we re-engage the unmotivated learner?

This is an age-old problem. Every unmotivated learner is a puzzle to be solved. Finding the key is usually through connecting to their interests, understanding the reason or importance of the learning goal, setting meaningful academic and personal goals, giving clear feedback, celebrating progress, creating a relationship with the student, and giving the student some control over their learning. We believe the performance-based system has the promise of all these strategies to help re-engage unmotivated students.

12. How will the performance-based system affect student's college preparation?

A performance-based system will substantially change a student's college preparation by making learners much more prepared for college-level coursework. The required curriculum of all learners at Lindsay High School is a college prep curriculum.

Grading, Assessment, and Reporting

1. How is work graded or scored?

Each learning target and MT may receive a score of 0-4. The minimum expectation is to receive a score of 3, meaning the learner has shown evidence that he/she is proficient at

the learning target. A score of 2 means that the learner has the simple knowledge, but still need to learn more. A score of 4 means the learner has gone beyond what was taught in class and is able to make inferences or apply the knowledge in some other area. This scale replaces all letter grades and all previously used scoring methods. It is not to be confused with the traditional A, B, C, D, or F grades or other rubric scores that are used in the traditional educational system.

2. When will my child be assessed on each MT? How will he or she know when they are ready to be assessed?

Your child will be regularly assessed and given feedback on the learning throughout the learning process. In addition, your child will be formally assessed on an MT when he/she has completed all of the learning targets at a proficient level and is ready to take the MT assessment. This can be determined by your child and the Learning Facilitator. Each learner will move at teacher pace or faster, resulting in evidence of learning completed in a timely manner.

3. What is the role and purpose of End-of-Topic Assessments (EOTs)?

The End-of-Topic (EOT) is an assessment that resembles the California Standardized Test and is usually our final piece of evidence to verify that the learner is proficient. It is used to verify the evidence (teacher-made assessments, assignments, and/or other demonstrations) that the learning targets were mastered.

4. Where does homework factor into the new grading system?

The purpose of homework is to help learners practice skills leading to mastery of the learning target. In the performance-based system, homework is not given to add credits, points, or scores for grading. Rather, students are graded on evidence that they have mastered the learning targets.

5. How are life-skills graded or scored?

Life skills, such as being a good citizen or a responsible worker, are part of the LUSD Life Long Learning Measurement Topics. These scores are often associated with participation, behavior, and work ethic. Scores are awarded on a 1 to 4 scale indicating the following: Score 1 – the learner never exhibits these characteristics; Score 2 – the learner sometimes exhibits these characteristics; Score 3 - the learner usually exhibits these characteristics; Score 4 – the learner always exhibits these characteristics. Life skills scores are always separated out from content or academic scores.

6. What will reporting progress look like?

Report cards will list the Level 3 learning targets (standards) in each content area. Parents will be able to view the fractional equivalent of how many learning targets in which the child has demonstrated level 3 knowledge in relation to the total number of learning targets required to complete an MT. Once all learning targets for an MT have been

learned at level 3 or higher, the final MT score is recorded as a 3.0, 3.5, or 4.0.

7. How will you communicate to a learner that they are under performing?

We will be honest with all learners and communicate the level at which they are performing. The performance-based system is designed to help learners know what skills and knowledge are needed in order to move to the next MT or content level. We will share models, anchor papers, or samples, and track progress to ensure that learners are well aware of their progress toward the learning goal. In addition, pacing calendars have been developed that provide learners with target dates for completing each MT. Annual progress expectations for learners are available at each site. Regular communication with your child facilitator is encouraged.

8. How will I know if my child is progressing at the appropriate pace?

All learners and parents will be able to clearly determine if a child is progressing at the appropriate pace by referring to LUSD Continuum of Learning and comparing it to your child's progress report. In addition, parents and learners may access Educate to view the student's snapshot, which contains scores on specific learning targets and tasks scores. Annual progress expectations for learners are available at each site and regular communication with your child facilitator is encouraged.

Performance-based placement allows learners to be placed at the appropriate content level based on his/her knowledge, not on chronological age or years in school as in the traditional model. For example, a learner may be in 6th grade, and receive content level 5 for ELA and content level 7 for Math.

2. How does a learner transition in and out of Lindsay Unified School District?

Coming into LUSD: Learner's transcripts will be evaluated and learners will take a placement test in some content areas. Appropriate placements will be made based on the classes that have been successfully completed and the skills and knowledge demonstrated on the placement test.

Leaving LUSD: The content levels will be translated back into grade level equivalents and a description of the learning in which our learners are involved will be included with the transcript.

3. What if my 6th grader is working on 2nd grade MT's and we transfer to another district. Will he be placed in 2nd grade?

Your child will transfer out of the LUSD as a 6th grader and be placed in 6th grade at the new school.