

Southern Regional Education Board – High Schools That Work:

Comprehensive Instructional Reform

SREB's design for comprehensive instructional reform focuses on the following:

Create career-focused pathways (or academies) that join rigorous academics with intellectually demanding career/technical studies linked to postsecondary opportunities. There are several ways to configure career-focused pathway programs of study. These can be set up as career-focused theme-based pathways or career academies. Create opportunities that allow students to use their core academic knowledge and skills in completing authentic projects. The career-focused courses will be organized around authentic projects — the kind of work that students would do in the real world. These courses would engage students both intellectually and emotionally in learning. Expand opportunities for students to participate in true work-based learning experiences as a part of the program of study.

Raise the quality of what is taught (Rigorous College and Career Readiness Standards) and how students are taught through ongoing, job-embedded professional development. Teachers need to use what they are learning immediately in their classroom instruction. Teams of teachers should observe each other's classes and discuss the effects of professional development and planning activities on instructional practices and student learning. The intent is to focus professional development around what teachers will be teaching, to help them better plan their instruction and to use proven instructional strategies for getting students to master the content. Three phases of professional development would span all three years.

- **Use the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC)** to assist English, social studies, science, related arts and career/technical teachers to embed the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in classrooms by preparing reading and writing tasks and units of study that give students the skills needed to meet raised expectations (see Attachment B for templates of the tasks). Teachers embed reading and writing mini-task assignments in the ladder of learning activities to help students produce a paper that demonstrates mastery of the materials.
- **Use the Mathematics Design Collaborative (MDC) to embed the CCSS and improve math instruction.** In most low-performing schools, students are given a steady diet of drill sheets and procedural mathematics. MDC helps teachers increase the percentage of instructional time spent on developing students' understanding of why they do certain procedures and developing their reasoning and problem-solving skills to use mathematics tools to solve a range of problems.
- **Prepare all CTE teachers to use project- and problem-based learning to engage students.** Begin work with career/technical teachers to design their courses around authentic projects. Students would take a career-focused course each year in high school, built around projects that will function as a lab where they will use what they are learning in their academic classes to do authentic work. Part of the training will involve the core academic teachers so they can see how they can relate their instruction to what students will be doing in career-focused classes around these projects.
- **Use protocols for teachers to analyze the quality and rigor of assignments and assessments.** Assignments Matter is an integral part of the SREB instructional design. Through common planning, teachers use protocols to improve the quality of all assignments and assessments in classrooms.