

# Saline 2000

## KEY ELEMENTS OF INSTRUCTION

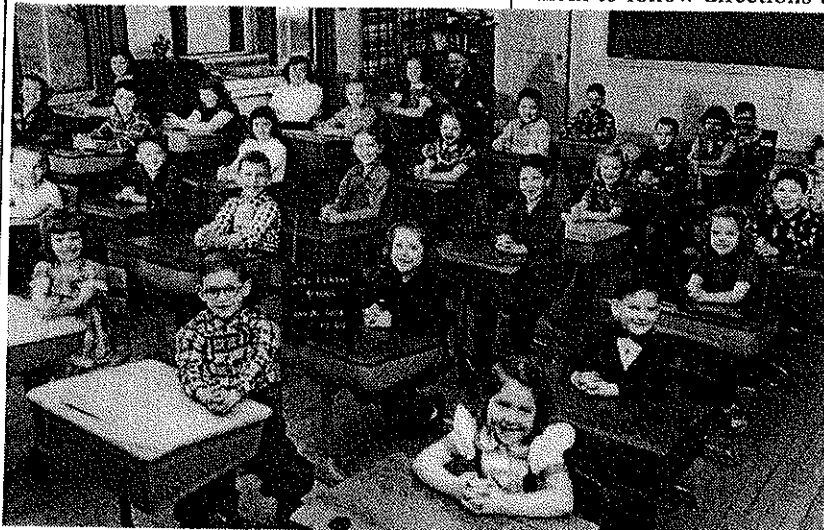
### Why Saline 2000?

*A story about change  
in America  
in Education  
and in Saline.*

*It was 1953.* The students sat at their desks which were lined up in several long, straight rows. They listened carefully to the teacher talking in the front of the room. Mrs. Jones was a good teacher and really seemed to care about her students. She lectured, gave directions, and would repeat explanations if students weren't getting it the first time. The students raised their hands to speak, never got out of their seats without permission, and tried to please Mrs. Jones by repeating the correct answers to her questions.

world, evidenced by American workers and products which were also the best in the world.

Students who dropped out of school before graduation had no trouble finding employment in the coal mines, the steel mills, the automotive factories, or any one of the millions of other good, honest labor-intensive, well-paid jobs across America. They were secure in the knowledge that if they chose, they could keep that job the rest of their lives, providing a good living for themselves and their families. Their bosses expected them to follow directions and do their



jobs correctly and on time. School prepared them to do that.

*Today* the American work scene has changed dramatically. American workers and products are facing stiff competition

Memorizing the right answer was important. Questioning the teacher and discovering different ways to look at things was not very important.

Sitting still, paying attention to Mrs. Jones, and following directions were important. Learning to work together with other students in teams was not very important.

Learning to read and write was important. Finishing high school was not all that important.

Even though nearly fifty percent of all students did not finish high school, there was not a serious high school drop out problem in our nation. American schools were undoubtedly the best in the

in the world market. Coal mines, steel mills, and auto plants are closing and down-sizing all across the nation. The remaining industrial jobs are highly automated, more technical, and require new skills and abilities. Successful companies all across America have made revolutionary changes in the way they do business. Front line workers have more responsibility to make decisions and solve problems. They work in teams, no longer in isolation. Employees are asked to be creative and innovative and to think for themselves and the company.

Some companies believed that they didn't have to change. Oh, they talked about change, and some even tinkered

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with a few changes. But in the end, there were no fundamental changes. Change was hard. It was more comfortable to do what they had always done than it was to learn new ways. "After all," they reasoned, "if the way we did business was good enough to work in 1953, it is good enough today." Many of those companies are gone. Those that are still around are scrambling to stay alive. The workers are good hard workers, the managers well intentioned. Their only crime is that they failed to see the signs -- they failed to make the changes necessary to keep up with the rest of the world.

The schools in America are talking about change. Some are beginning to make a few changes. But, change is hard. It is more comfortable to do what we have always done than to learn new ways. "After all," we reason, "if the way schools operated was good enough in 1953, it is good enough today."



But there are signs we can no longer ignore. Businesses tell us that the people they hire from our schools and colleges can't make effective decisions, don't have problem solving skills, and don't know how to work with others in teams. They say there is a crisis in education. They say there needs to be a revolution in American education, that American schools need to restructure.

In Saline Area Schools we see the signs and understand the need to change for the better. We know that change is hard. But if our students are going to be successful tomorrow, we have an obligation -- a duty -- to change today. Saline 2000 is what we call our community-wide effort to improve our

educational system. All of us -- teachers, students, parents, administrators, school board, school employees, businesses and community -- must work together to decide what changes to make and how to make them.



One of the first steps in this process was to figure out what key elements must be part of our new and improved schools. Over the past few years, we gathered research, visited other schools, studied, learned, talked, surveyed, and debated. As a result, we have discovered the following twelve **Key Elements of Instruction** that must become common place in every classroom and for every student in Saline. These Key Elements may sound like jargon, but they are really simple, common sense ideas. The Key Elements are:

1. Basic Skills
2. Authentic Assessment
3. Outcomes Based Education
4. Integrated, Interdisciplinary Curriculum
5. Multiple Intelligences
6. Heterogeneous Grouping
7. Higher Order Thinking
8. Student Centered Instruction
9. Reality Based Education
10. Cooperative Learning
11. Service Learning
12. Collaborative Teaching

For more information on any of the Key Elements of Instruction, contact the Superintendent's office at (313) 429-5454. ¶

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## KEY ELEMENTS OF INSTRUCTION

### Definitions:

### Key Elements of Instruction

#### 1 Basic Skills

A sound foundation in the essential content area skills as identified in the Michigan Core Curriculum:

- World Studies
- Technology Education
- Physical Education and Health
- Mathematics and Science
- Life Management
- Language Arts (reading, writing, listening, speaking, literature)
- Cultural and Aesthetic Awareness
- Career and Employability
- Arts (art, music, drama, dance)

#### 2 Authentic Assessment

Measurements which allow the student to demonstrate real knowledge, multiple perspectives and self assessment.

#### 3 Outcomes Based Education

A planned educational program based on exit, program, course, unit and lesson outcomes which state what students should know, do and be like as a result of their school experience.

#### 4 Integrated Interdisciplinary Curriculum

Curriculum is combined to create a reality based educational experience (e.g. studying the renaissance through its art, music, literature and history).

#### 5 Multiple Intelligence

People possess multiple intelligences in varying strengths and degrees. The learning environment must allow for each individual's learning style. The multiple intelligences include, but are not limited to:

- verbal
- musical
- logical
- spatial
- bodily (kinesthetic)
- interpersonal (social knowledge)
- intrapersonal (self knowledge)

#### 6 Heterogeneous Grouping

Groups of students who have different social backgrounds, skill levels, physical capabilities and gender are taught together. As a mirror of the real world, students are taught to encounter, accept, appreciate and celebrate differences.

#### 7 Higher Order Thinking

Using critical thinking to develop a progression of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation

#### 8 Student Centered Instruction

Students participate in planning the educational program; are actively involved in daily learning; and assist in evaluating their progress (plan-do-review). Teachers, parents and mentors act as guides and resources.

#### 9 Reality Based Education

Educational experiences that clearly relate to real life.

#### 10 Cooperative Learning

Students working in pairs or in small groups to develop teaming skills and attain mastery of the student outcomes.

#### 11 Service Learning

Opportunities for students to learn and apply new skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities.

#### 12 Collaborative Teaching

Teams of teachers working together with groups of students to master the student outcomes.

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## KEY ELEMENTS OF INSTRUCTION

### 1 Basic Skills

*A sound foundation in the essential content area skills as identified in the Michigan Core Curriculum:*

- World Studies
- Technology Education
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- Arts (art, music, drama, and dance)

The Michigan Core Curriculum identifies: World Studies, Technology, Physical Education and Health, Mathematics and Science, Life Management, Language Arts, Cultural and Aesthetic Awareness, Career and Employability, and Arts as the essential core curriculum subject areas. Each of these subject areas has specific basic skills that need to be mastered by all students.

Basic skills are the foundation for what we teach in Saline Area Schools. Our mission is to graduate all students with the knowledge, technological proficiency, and the personal skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex local and global society. To achieve this goal, our curriculum incorporates these basic or core subjects to prepare individuals for further education and the workplace in the 21st century.

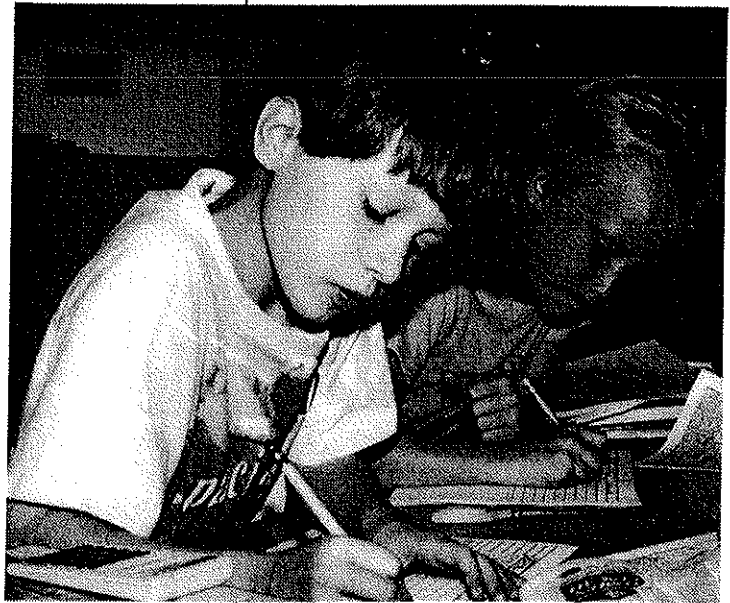
This article features the basic skills graduates will exhibit in English, Math, Science, History and Geography.

#### ENGLISH

The basic skills for English emphasize reading, writing, speaking, listening, and literature. The learner will be able to:

- Use the reading process to construct meaning from text;
- Read to experience other times, places, and events;

- Read to acquire and apply new information; and to gain self-insight as well as insight into the human condition;
- Use written language to share information and knowledge, to influence and persuade, and to create and entertain;
- Hear and understand orally transmitted messages;



- Transmit verbal messages that are effectively delivered and understood by the receiver;
- Use technology as a tool to obtain, organize, and manipulate information and for communication and creative expression.

Learners will study how to generate and discover ideas; consider audience and purpose; discover, organize and record thoughts; use punctuation, spell, and determine word choice; be critical listeners, understand communication concepts and processes; understand the structure and function of literature; and

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apply literature to life experiences.

### **MATHEMATICS**

The basic skills for mathematics emphasize learning fundamentals and developing skills in critical thinking and logical reasoning.

The learner will be able to:

- Value mathematics and be able to articulate that understanding;
- Demonstrate conceptual understanding as well as proficiency in operations skills;
- Apply conceptual understanding, operational skills, and technological tools to solve problems;
- Communicate mathematical ideas orally and in writing;
- Reason mathematically;
- Understand and be able to articulate the interconnectedness of mathematics to all other disciplines.

Learners will study topics including whole numbers and numeration; fractions, decimals, ratio, and percentage; measurement; geometric concepts; algebraic concepts; statistics and probability; and problem solving and logical reasoning. Emphasis will be on the real life applications of mathematics as a key method of learning.

### **SCIENCE**

The basic skills for science address the nature of science, the construction of new knowledge and how to apply scientific principles to real-world situations. Technology is closely aligned to science and the outcomes are connected with technological literacy.

The learner will be able to:

- Apply scientific knowledge to everyday experience;
- Reflect on the nature of scientific knowledge;
- Construct new personal knowledge about science.
- Understand the role and impact of technology upon society;
- Identify when to use technology to solve a problem or accomplish a task, then select and apply the appropriate

technological system.

The learner will develop both the ability to construct new scientific knowledge and use scientific knowledge from the life, physical, and earth sciences. The learner will also apply technological processes and skills to solve problems.

### **HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY**

The basic skills for these "world studies" aim at the knowledge, skills, and democratic values essential to being a responsible citizen and employee in our multi-cultural, interdependent global society. Learners will become responsible citizens who:

- Know and exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities;
- Assess the relationships among their community, state, nation, and the world at large, based upon the knowledge and understanding of the social sciences, including history, geography, government, and economics;
- Appreciate, understand, and respect other cultures and have the ability to communicate in other languages;
- Understand their duty to become active participants in the socio/political process.

The learner will gain knowledge of fundamental geographical themes, basic economic concepts, and American and world history which will be applied to classroom, career, and service learning.

For a copy of the Michigan Core Curriculum or for more information on basic skills in the other subject areas, contact the Superintendent's office at (313) 429-5454. ¶



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## 2 Authentic Assessment

*Measurements which allow the student to demonstrate real knowledge, multiple perspectives and self assessment (e.g. projects, observations, interviews, essays, portfolios, performance tests, exhibitions).*

Have you ever known anyone who “freezes” when they take a test? Even if they know the information, they do poorly at test time. Or what about the student who knows how to study for a test, but then can’t recall most of what they studied after the test is over. Or maybe you know a student who got an “A” on the math test on percentages, but can’t figure out the sale price of a pair of jeans that are 30% off.

A growing awareness of the inadequacy of traditional test methods has led to assessments which involve students in more realistic tasks -- known as authentic assessment. Educators must switch from reliance on traditional paper-and-pencil, fill-in-the-blank, short-term memory tests, to new methods which ask students to perform actual skills such as writing, speaking or problem solving. Teachers must be willing to face the challenge of creating ways to evaluate students which accurately measure learning.

New assessment methods that reflect thinking, rather than short term memory of isolated facts are needed. These new

methods may include teacher made tests, portfolios, projects, classroom presentations, essays, demonstrations, and other performance assessment models that help students take responsibility for evaluating the quality of their learning. Students won’t just “spit back” facts learned for a test, but they will actually have to show that they can think through a problem, and use their knowledge and skills in realistic situations.

The information gained from authentic assessment is far more valuable than a simple letter grade. Authentic assessment gives a better look at what a student really knows or can do. Therefore, as teachers conference with students and parents, they will be able to give specific information on the student’s strengths and areas needing improvement. In addition, authentic assessment provides more information for both colleges and employers, by giving a snapshot of actual student performance.

For more information on authentic assessment, contact the Superintendent’s office at (313) 429-5454. ¶

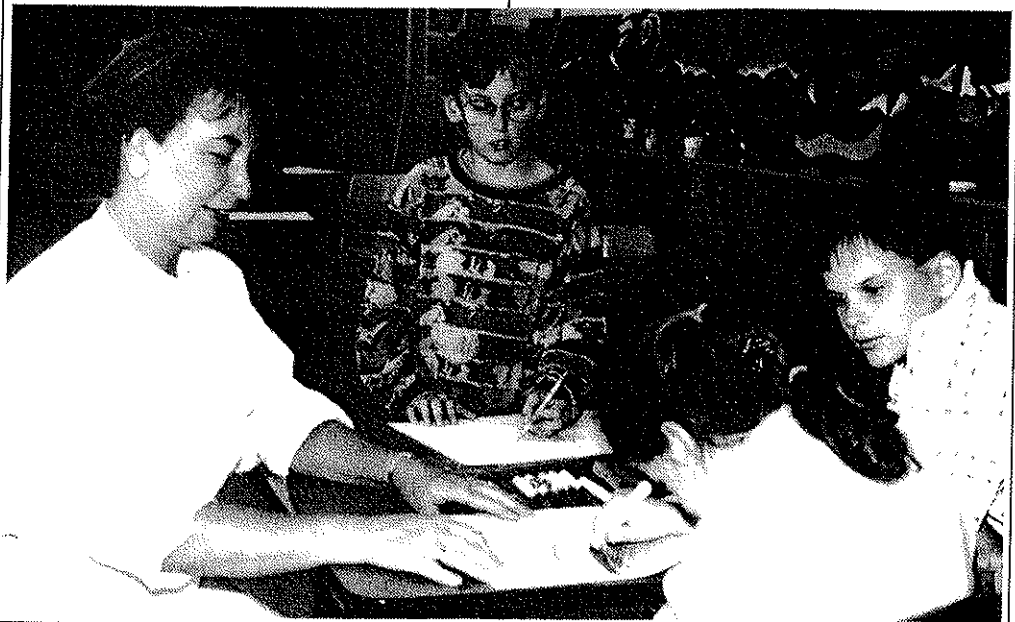
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### 3 Outcomes Based Education

*A planned educational program based on exit, program, course, unit and lesson outcomes which state what students should know, do and be like as a result of their school experience.*

If a teacher teaches a lesson, but the student doesn't learn it, has education occurred? Outcomes based education says **no**. In outcomes based education, the focus is on making sure students learn, not simply making sure that the lesson was presented. Outcomes based education is a process based on the philosophy that all children can learn. Schools establish a clear set of goals (outcomes) for student learning, measure the student's progress, and use a variety of teaching strategies and enough time to meet the needs of the student. Outcomes based education emphasizes that the district, the teachers, the parents and the students are more accountable for student learning.

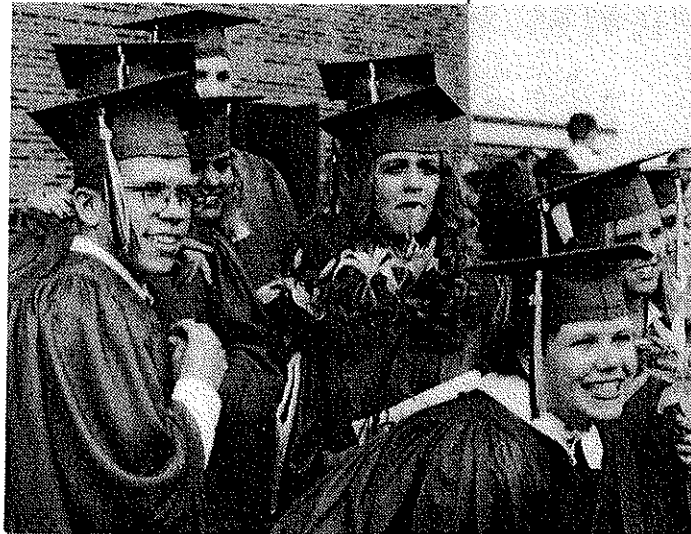
Science, Language Arts (reading, writing, speaking), World Studies, Technology, Physical Education, Health, Life Management, Arts, Music, Career and Employability.

Then the specific skills and knowledge that students should know and do are established as outcomes for each grade, course, unit, and daily lesson. Always, the concentration is on what students should learn in each lesson, unit, class, and grade. What gets taught is then carefully planned to match the expectations or outcomes at each of these levels. Students are tested in a variety of ways to determine if they achieved the outcomes. If they have achieved them, the student moves on to the next level.

If the student has not met the outcomes, he/she will receive additional instruction until the outcomes are met. In outcomes based education, it is not acceptable to pass students on from one level to the next until they have learned the material.

Critics are concerned that

outcomes based education will lower the standards for learning. In fact, the opposite is true. Outcomes based education is based on the expectation that students will learn at an appropriate level and not slide by with below average work. In a traditional school, a student who gets a "D" grade still gets credit for the course and passes to the next level. In outcomes based education, that student



Working cooperatively with the community, a district first sets broad goals for what each student should be able to know, do or be like when they graduate from the school district. These are called Exit Outcomes. Next the district determines Program Outcomes which specify broad skills and knowledge necessary at graduation in each of the curriculum areas: Math,

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would receive additional teaching and assistance until they are able to achieve the equivalent of a "B" or better. On the other hand, a student who excels in a particular subject would move on to higher levels more rapidly. In outcomes based school districts, graduating students who are functionally illiterate will be a thing of the past.

In 1990, the Michigan State Legislature passed a bill targeted at improving public education. This law, known as Public Act 25, requires all public schools in Michigan to have a school improvement plan which includes "goals based on student outcomes for all students." Saline Area Schools worked for several months with staff, students, parents and community to determine, confirm and commit to our Exit Outcomes:

- **Responsible Citizens** contribute to society through decision making, action, and by understanding, respecting, and appreciating the world community.

- **Collaborative Contributors** use effective leadership and group skills to develop and manage interpersonal relationships within diverse settings.
- **Self-Directed Learners** take the initiative to learn throughout their lives.
- **Competent Communicators** demonstrate listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
- **Effective Thinkers** locate, evaluate and apply information to solve problems and make decisions.
- **Healthy Life-Style Managers** demonstrate mental, physical, social, and emotional wellness for self and community.

The district is continuing its work on determining the Program, Course, Grade, Unit and Lesson Outcomes. For more information on the Saline Area School curriculum and outcomes based education, contact the Superintendent's office at (313) 429-5454. ¶



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## 4 Integrated Interdisciplinary Curriculum

*Curriculum is combined to create a reality based educational experience (e.g. studying the renaissance through its art, music, literature and history).*

The birth of the space age in the 1960's launched an information explosion in this country. Now, thirty years into this information age, educators are faced with some difficult questions. How do we teach students to deal with the rapid changes they will face in their lives? How do we add more and more information to an already full course load? How do we best prepare our students for their future?

One answer is to create an integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum. In traditional schools each subject is studied separately with little or no connection shown between subjects. For example, a student might study percentages in math, then go to English class for creative writing, followed by an American history class to study the American Revolution -- and so on throughout the day. In each class no reference is made to the information studied in the other classes.

In an interdisciplinary approach, students learn the relationship between subjects as teachers integrate several subject areas in ways that are more like real life. In this example, the math and science teachers work with the history teacher to develop a unit of study around the theme of the American Revolution. The creative writing activities in English involve the American Revolution theme. In math the students discover the percentage of tax being imposed upon the people before the American Revolution and how that compares to the percentage of taxes people pay today.

The students gain greater understanding and appreciation for their experiences when the connections between courses are clear. According to Jacobs (1989), there are three positive outcomes for students taught in an integrated, interdisciplinary setting. They

include students who are:

- more skilled at and comfortable with flexible thinking
- receptive to multiple points of view
- adept at generating analogies and metaphors (making connections between diverse settings)



Our schools must prepare students for the constantly changing work environment, a world where it is estimated that workers will change careers an average of seven times during their work lives. The challenge to educators is to create and modify real experiences within the school day that will prepare students for the future.

An integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum allows students to develop flexible thinking, multiple points of view, and the ability to make connections between diverse settings -- skills that will enable our graduates to better handle the challenges in their futures.

For more information on integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum, contact the Superintendent's office at (313) 429-5454.†

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## 5 Multiple Intelligence

*People possess multiple intelligences in varying strengths and degrees. The learning environment must allow for each individual's learning style. The multiple intelligences include, but are not limited to:*

- verbal
- musical
- logical
- spatial
- bodily (kinesthetic)
- interpersonal (social knowledge)
- intrapersonal (self knowledge)

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Do you remember the person in your class who struggled academically but had great athletic ability or was the "natural" leader or could fix anything? If so, you probably also remember that they weren't considered very smart and never seemed to score well on standardized tests.

For the most part, public education is still using standardized tests to measure success, despite the fact that this type of testing only measures a limited portion of a person's intelligence. As a result, a lot of potential is being overlooked and many students are being short changed.

Early in 1970, Dr. Howard Gardner and several colleagues at Harvard University were asked to do research on the human brain and its capabilities. What they discovered has begun to transform the way we think about intelligence and the human capacity to enjoy learning.

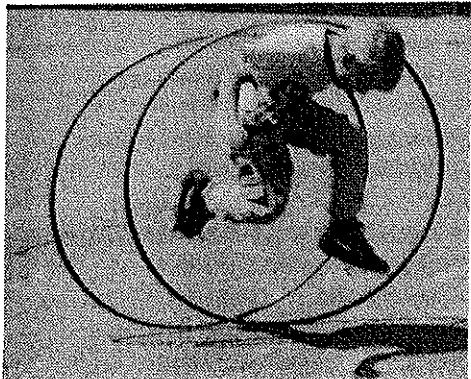
According to Dr. Gardner's research, we now know that instead of having one all-encompassing mental aptitude that can be measured by an I.Q. test, people have at least seven separate and distinct intelligences which are described as follows:

- **LINGUISTIC** - the ability to think in words and to use words to express and appreciate complex meanings; poets, playwrights, journalists, lawyers, or translators typically exhibit this intelligence.
- **LOGICAL / MATHEMATICAL** - the ability to reason about propositions, to make inferences, to calculate, qualify and carry out complex mathematical operations; logicians, mathematicians and scientists exhibit this intelligence.



- **SPATIAL** - the ability to perceive the visual world accurately and re-create or transform aspects of it based on those perceptions. Sailors, airplane pilots, sculptors, painters, and architects exhibit this intelligence.
- **MUSICAL** - the ability to "think" in musical tones, pitch, melody, phrases, and rhythmic units; composers and singers exhibit this intelligence.

- **BODILY / KINESTHETIC** - the ability to use the body and handle objects skillfully to solve problems or to fashion products with one's whole body, or with parts of one's body, such as one's hands or one's mouth; athletes, dancers, actors, mimes, craftspeople and surgeons all exhibit this intelligence.



- **INTERPERSONAL** - the ability to understand other people, and to use such understanding so as to interact effectively with such individuals; teachers, therapists, clinicians, actors, politicians, salespeople and religious leaders exhibit this intelligence.
- **INTRAPERSONAL** - the ability to understand one's own feelings, wishes, fears, goals, intelligence, and the capacity to use such self-knowledge effectively to plan and pursue one's life; therapists, religious leaders, and social workers exhibit this intelligence.

Every person possesses a unique "profile" of these seven intelligences and exhibit them in varying strengths. Unfortunately, most schools emphasize the linguistic and logical-mathematical perspectives at the expense of the other areas. In his book, "The Unschooled Mind," Dr. Gardner writes, "It's important to recognize that there are many people who could make wonderful contributions to the world who don't happen to have that particular blend (linguistic and logical-mathematical). If we are concerned with those individual's lives we cannot ignore this fact."

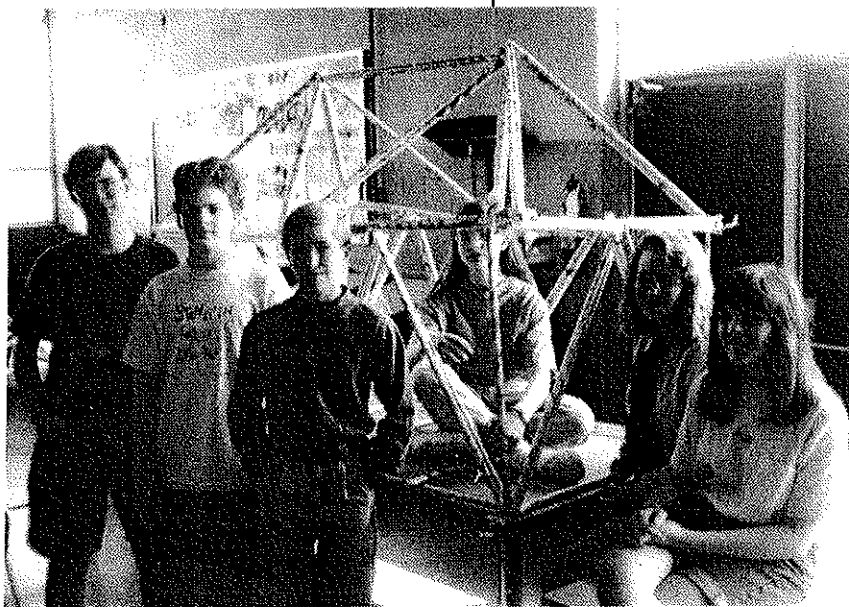
During the 1980's, Dr. Gardner's research was evaluated and measured through various pilot programs in several schools across the country. These pilot programs have shown exciting results, and now in the 1990's, this research is being applied in many classrooms.

Being aware of multiple intelligences doesn't automatically translate into better teaching. Dr. Gardner says, "To get teachers to think about their strengths, their students' strengths, and how to achieve curricular goals while taking those strengths and different profiles seriously is a huge job. So long as one takes only a single perspective or tack on a concept or problem, it is virtually certain that students will understand that concept in only the most limited rigid fashion."

For this reason, Saline is looking to identify a variety of ways to assess student achievement and learning. We will provide our staff with development opportunities so that they become familiar with how Dr. Gardner's research can be applied in the classroom.

By adopting Multiple Intelligences as part of our Mission, Beliefs, and Key Elements, Saline Area Schools are committed to helping all of our students reach their full potential and to recognizing the special worth of each and every person's intellectual gifts.

For more information on multiple intelligences, contact the Superintendent's office at (313) 429-5454. ¶



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## 6 Heterogeneous Grouping

*Groups of students who have different social backgrounds, skill levels, physical capabilities and gender are taught together, as a mirror of the real world. Students are taught to encounter, accept, appreciate and celebrate differences.*



When our parents went to school, students of many ages were taught together and the teacher's expectations were similar within each age level. Then came the Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) testing, and suddenly educators began to sort and select students by ability. Educators call this homogeneous grouping or tracking. Many of us grew up with this practice. The idea was that groups of higher ability students could

achieve more when they were not held down by slower ability students. Because all students are participating in the same curriculum which has high expectations for them, they all do better. The middle and lower groups benefit from interaction with faster learning peers. In addition, lower students who would normally give up because they are not expected to achieve respond to higher expectations with higher achievement and greater self-esteem.

Second, the higher groups benefit from heterogeneous grouping by learning more than the material. When they function as tutors and group leaders, they learn leadership skills, teaching skills, social skills, and develop self-confidence.

Third, studies show that students are less unruly and disruptive when they are in heterogeneous groups than when they are in homogeneous groups. When the class climate is steady, all students learn more.

Finally, heterogeneous grouping allows for alternatives for learning.

achieve more when they were not held down by slower ability students. Conversely, slower students would do better if they weren't competing with brighter students.

Current research indicates that homogeneous grouping (or tracking) **doesn't work**. Educational researchers suggest that there are many advantages to using mixed ability or heterogeneous groups, which mix high, middle, and low ability students in classrooms together.

First, there is an increase of student

Several of the key elements of instruction that Saline has adopted will be implemented best in heterogeneous classrooms: cooperative learning, student-centered instruction, multiple intelligence, integrated curriculum, reality based education, basic skills, higher order thinking skills and community service.

For more information on heterogeneous grouping, contact the Superintendent's office at (313) 429-5454. †

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## 7 Higher Order Thinking

*Using critical thinking to develop a progression of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation*



Simple understanding and comprehension of knowledge is not enough for today's world. Students need to be able to problem solve and make decisions to survive in our technological, information-based society. In order to solve problems and make decisions, students will need to acquire specific higher order thinking skills, including:

- **Comparison** - students identify how things are alike and how they are different.
- **Classification** - students categorize items according to similar characteristics.
- **Induction** - students draw conclusions.
- **Deduction** - students make predictions.

- **Error analysis** - students identify errors in reasoning.
- **Constructing support** - students provide support for their ideas.
- **Abstracting** - students apply what they have learned to other situations.
- **Analyzing perceptions** - students identify their reasoning and provide alternative solutions.

As we progress toward the 21st century, public schools must provide their graduates with higher order thinking skills so that students can take the skills with them to the university, community college, or to the workplace.

For more information on higher order thinking, contact the Superintendent's office at (313) 429-5454. †

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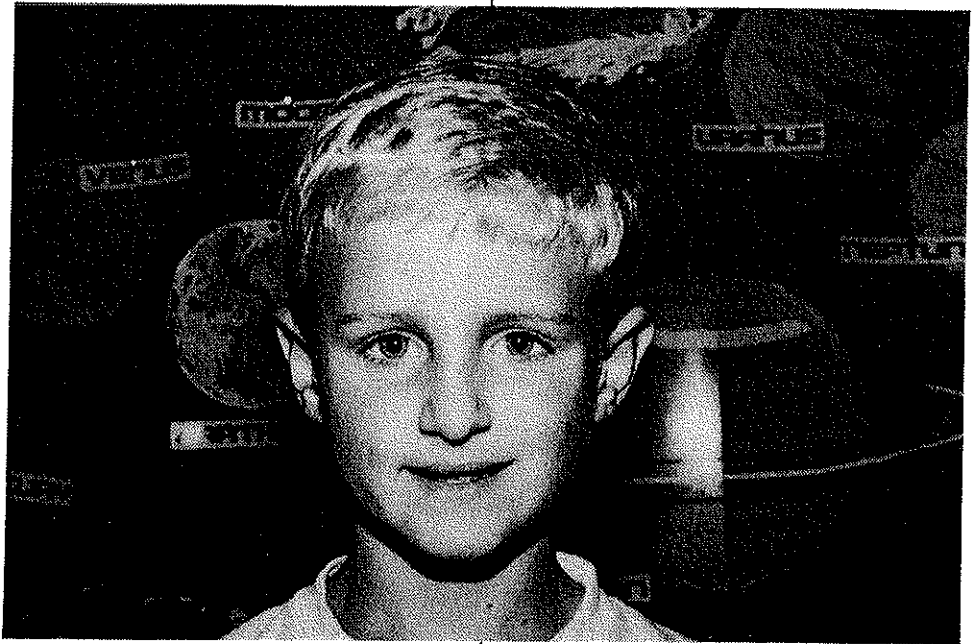
### 8 Student Centered Instruction

*Students participate in planning the educational program; are actively involved in daily learning; and assist in evaluating their progress (plan-do-review). Teachers, parents and mentors act as guides and resources.*

Research states that the most effective way to learn is through a "being there experience." In other words, students need to be more involved in their own learning. This means many changes in the design of the learning experience. Teachers will no longer develop lessons in isolation. Instead, teachers will plan together with students and parents. When students and parents are given an opportunity to participate in the planning, students take a more active role in the learning.

Students learn to make judgements and ask and answer such questions as: What do I do next? How do I best use my time? What weaknesses do I need to strengthen?

Teachers have a new and different role in student centered instruction. They act as facilitators who provide guidance to students to keep them focused. They keep the active learning process moving forward. They evaluate how the learning is progressing on a daily basis and determine if it needs to change.



With student centered instruction, the student also takes on a greater role as a worker and decision maker. These responsibilities in the classroom better prepare students for the workplace and other adult roles. Unlike yesterdays' workplace, which required employees to work in isolation, today's workplace demands teaming and collaboration skills. In school, students spend too much time watching passively as the teacher works in front of the class. In a student centered classroom, the student will spend more time actively involved in the learning -- doing instead of watching.

The focus of student centered instruction is to develop the concepts of responsible choice, active learning and realistic evaluation of intellectual skills for the student. The classroom and curriculum design need to focus on building an open, honest environment where trust is felt by all involved.

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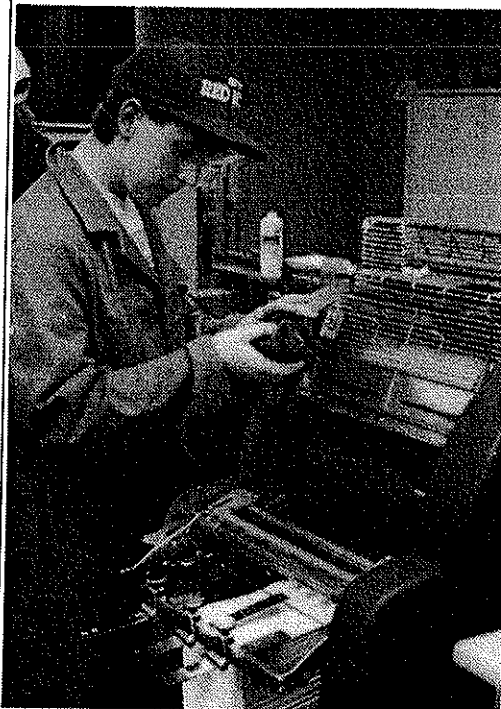
# Saline 2000

K E Y   E L E M E N T S   O F   I N S T R U C T I O N

## 9 Reality Based Education

*Educational experiences that clearly relate to real life.*

When you were a student, how many times did you ask yourself, "How will I ever use this information in the real world?" Some of the bolder students even asked the teacher that question. Reality based education is based on the belief that learning experiences in school must have relevance to the real world. In other words, the experiences we have in school should closely resemble the experiences we encounter in real life.



Reality based education, sometimes called authentic learning, can take many forms. In fact, reality based education is not new. We all had experiences that were reality based when we were in school: a story problem in math, an experiment in science, or a trip to the museum are just a few examples. Imagine trying to learn to use a computer by reading the manual, but never actually seeing or touching a computer. Ridiculous, isn't it? We learn best by

actually doing and applying our knowledge in real situations. Research suggests that the more authentic we can make a learning situation, the more likely a student will understand and use the knowledge effectively in real situations.

People interested in improving schools have told us that we must put less emphasis on theoretical concepts in American education and put a greater emphasis on reality based learning. Willard Daggett, world renown school reformer, notes, "The American curriculum is very theoretical in nature and has become more so in recent years as it has been driven by standardized tests."

This accounts for part of the reason why American students do so poorly on international tests. While American standardized tests concentrate on theory, international tests go the next step, asking students to apply the theory in life-like situations. In general, American students are not prepared to use their knowledge in real life situations. Furthermore, business leaders have told us that even though a recent graduate may have had good grades in school this does not always mean they can write a short concise business memo, relate well to customers, or solve simple problems on their own.

Reality based education finds ways to translate theoretical knowledge into skills and abilities that are useful in real life. Saline Area Schools are committed to developing more authentic learning opportunities for students. Examples of this commitment include training for teachers and development of business and community partnerships.

For more information on reality based education, contact the Superintendent's office at (313) 429-5454.†

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allows high achievers to learn far more than just academic content. They practice leadership and teaming skills, and learn about conflict resolution. Special needs students develop and learn more by working with the other students on the team.

Although, at a glance, cooperative learning appears to be a simple concept, it is not an easy one to implement. Most students are not skilled in collaborating and need specific training in how to work effectively with other students. Careful planning and considerable experience is needed for teachers to be able to use cooperation routinely in their classrooms.

Teachers must use a variety of instructional methods in order to meet the different learning needs of all students. Recent research shows us that only 25% of our students learn from the lecture method. This means that 75% of our students are missing out on learning if they are only exposed to instruction through lecture. Cooperative learning is one of those instructional methods identified as a "best practice." As a Key Element of Instruction, Saline expects to turn this "best practice" into common practice.

For more information on cooperative learning, contact the Superintendent's office at (313) 429-5454.



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## 11 Service Learning

*Opportunities for students to learn and apply new skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities.*

According to the National and Community Service Act of 1990, service learning is a method of teaching and learning:

- That creates an atmosphere under which students learn and develop **through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences** that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community;
- That is **integrated into the students' academic curriculum** and provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity;
- That provides students with opportunities to **use newly acquired skills and knowledge** in real-life situations in their own communities; and,
- That enhances what is taught in school by **extending student learning beyond the classroom** and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.

Service learning takes the concept of community service a giant step forward. In one example of a community service project, students collect clothes and food to donate to needy families. The students develop an awareness of others in need and have the opportunity to experience the joy of helping others. If this same project is developed into a service learning activity, students would study the issues of poverty, hunger and unemployment in social studies. In writing class, they would write letters requesting donations, news releases for the newspapers, thank-you notes for those who donated, as well as writing

stories about their thoughts regarding poverty in their community. Math students would establish a budget for the project and keep records of donations and their value. The students would also learn to work together as a team to solve problems and accomplish a common goal. Service learning is more than a good deed that students do in addition to their studies, it is their study. Academic skills are taught through the real-life experience of the service project.



When service learning is implemented, everyone is a winner. The school and community win whenever important community needs are addressed. But the students are the big winners as they gain academic skills, build self-esteem, learn to respect and understand others, and practice good citizenship.

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## KEY ELEMENTS OF INSTRUCTION

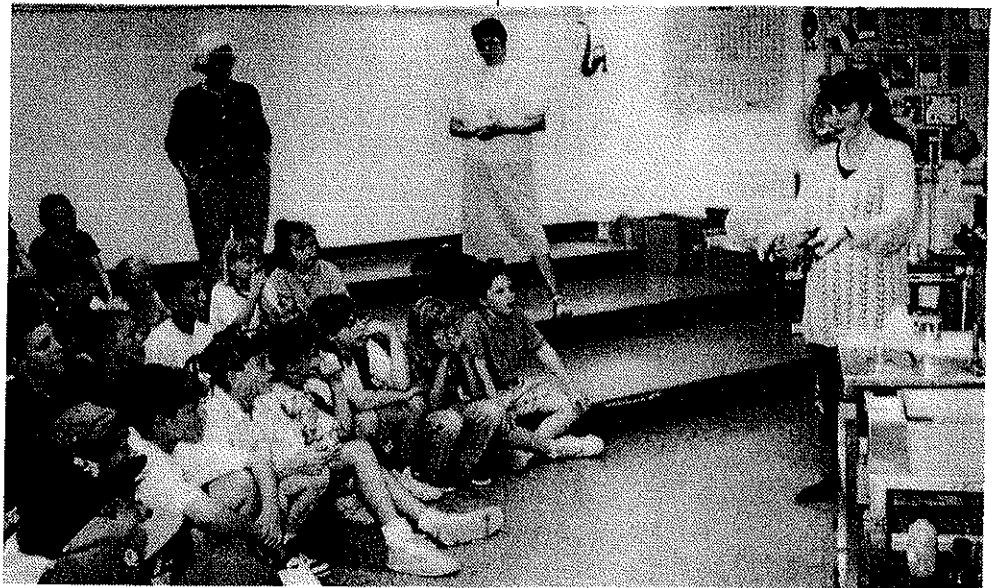
### 12 Collaborative Teaching

*Teams of teachers working together with groups of students to master the student outcomes.*

If teachers really want to prepare their students for the 21st century they will need to accomplish it through collaboration with their fellow staff members and with the community. The enormous task of transforming our schools will take the pooling of resources and talents of everyone. American education, from its inception, has perpetuated the idea of working alone.

connection to goals set by other staff and no input from other resources.

Successful schools of the 21st century will be places where teachers realize that everyone has something valuable to share and that much of the work they are doing is made easier through collaboration. Teachers will discover that an open door allows each of us to learn from the successes and



From the one room schoolhouse where the teacher may have been the only employee, to the present day building with its individual classrooms and closed doors, the teacher has been expected to plan alone, work alone, and evaluate students' progress alone. Teachers have been forced into solitude because of separate planning periods, before and after school responsibilities, and nightly sessions of paper grading and progress reporting. Performance evaluations have been left to one building administrator and the teacher, meeting in private sessions, to establish goals for improvement for the year with no

failures of others. By working together, teachers will realize that sharing the many responsibilities of educating students will make education better for all.

Planning time will consist of a team meeting attended by instructors, consultants, administrators and parents. The individual needs of all students will be addressed and each person will contribute their expertise to arrive at decisions on how to best meet the needs of each child. Teacher performance and improvement will be part of a collaborative process where teachers set common goals for improvement and

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evaluation will be based on a group's progress toward achieving those goals.

The need for collaboration in education does not end at the instructional level. If it is the responsibility of the school to prepare students either for further education or a successful occupation, then schools must collaborate with businesses and universities to determine the skills that should be taught so that students can be successful. As the needs of business continue to change, the subjects taught in schools must also change. Only through collaboration will schools be able to keep up with the changing requirements of the business world.

Schools can also look to other school districts for collaboration. Although schools have been sharing staff and course offerings with neighboring

districts for some time, little has been discussed about bringing entire communities together to advance the educational system.

As a first step, over the past few years all employees in Saline Area Schools have received training in teaming and collaboration skills. The District has also established partnerships with several area businesses and other school districts. Realizing that there is still much work to be done in the area of collaboration, the District has identified *parent involvement* and *business partnerships* as the two areas of community collaboration which will receive high priority over the next few years.

For more information on collaborative teaching, contact the Superintendent's office at (313) 429-5454. ¶