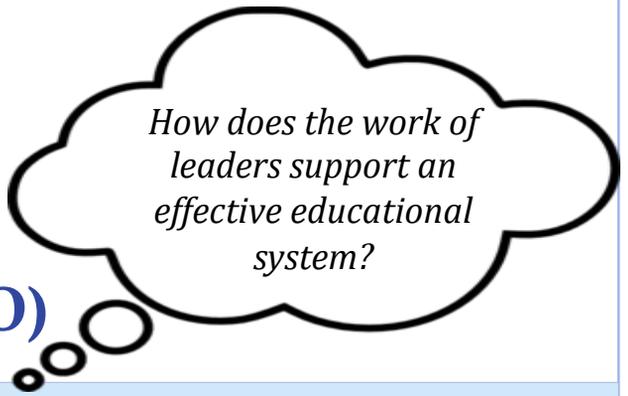


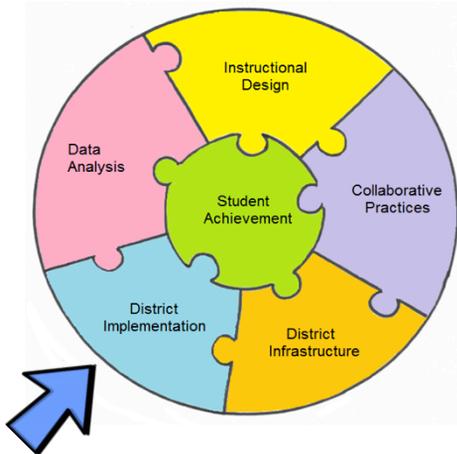
# Critical Question #2

## How do we teach effectively to ensure students are learning? (DO)



**Fundamental Practice 5.** *The district designs, communicates, and ensures implementation of an instructional framework that describes commonly expected, research-based instructional methods that actively, meaningfully, and rigorously engage students in learning.*

Over the last 45 years, research has identified classroom instructional methods and strategies that have demonstrated a positive effect on student learning. It is critical that districts and schools identify and ensure the use of those effective and rigorous methods and strategies that provide students the best opportunity to learn and demonstrate mastery. This implies that (1) teachers are trained in those research-based instructional methods, (2) those expected methods and strategies are understood and practiced by all instructional staff, (3) all instructional staff members are accountable to visibly implement those methods and strategies, and (4) district and school leaders regularly monitor classrooms to ensure every child receives effective and engaging classroom instruction, regardless of teacher, content, or grade level. Marzano and DuFour (2011) suggest that while the literature is full of “research-based” instructional methods and strategies, the final evidence of effective instruction is whether, in fact, students in a given classroom are learning.

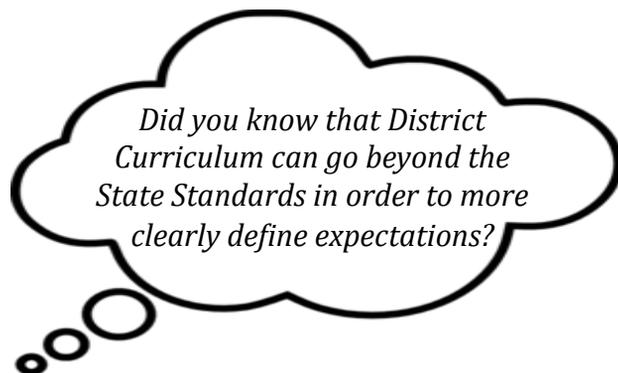
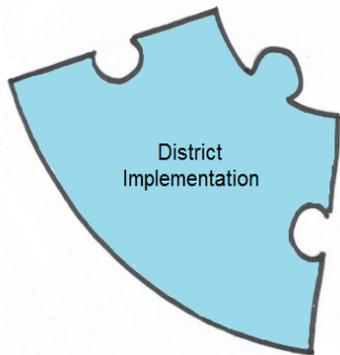


### Guiding Questions:

- Has the district identified and expected effective instructional strategies within a district instructional framework?
- How is the district communicating those instructional practices that will have the highest impact on student learning?
- How are teachers focusing instructional strategies specifically on the grade-level expectations and evidence outcomes identified in the curriculum?
- How does the district ensure classroom instructional methods are research based?

### Reflections:

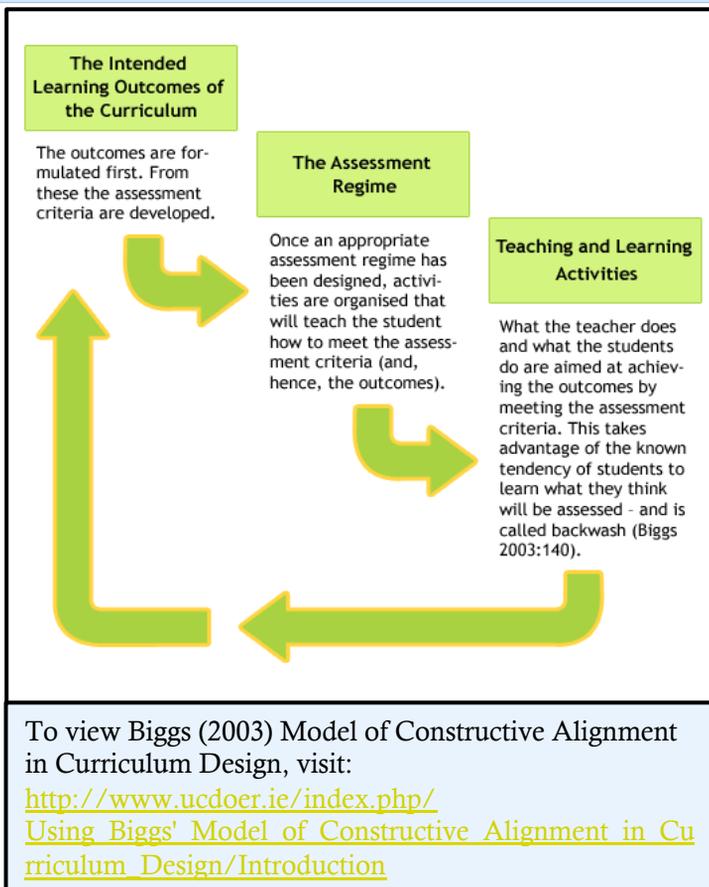
1. As a leader, what is my role in ensuring this fundamental practice is taking place in my district and schools?
2. What are current barriers that are getting in the way of successfully implementing this fundamental practice systemically in my district and schools?
3. When I return to my district/school, I will complete the following three action steps to begin enhancing our (my and my staff's) application of this fundamental practice:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_



In *How School District Leaders Can Support the Use of Data to Improve Teaching and Learning*, Dougherty (2015) used research on data use and the critical actions described in the ACT Core Practice Framework. Case studies were conducted in two Texas school districts with leadership teams that were known to be interested in promoting the effective use of data in order to determine ten steps that district leaders can take to improve data use. The first step is:

**Develop and refine a content-rich district curriculum that states clearly what students are expected to learn in each grade and subject.**

State standards often provide only a partial description of these expectations. A written District curriculum can specify more clearly and in greater detail what is to be learned. Providing a coherent, sequenced curriculum is important because students' prior knowledge plays a vital role in enabling them to make sense of new information. A well-designed curriculum can help ensure that what is taught in each grade prepares students well to learn the content in subsequent grades. The district curriculum should be content rich in the early grades to give students the vocabulary and knowledge they will need to be good readers and learners in the upper grades. From a data use perspective, the district curriculum should be the starting point from which data indicators on student learning are selected and used. For example, district leaders should ensure that the state test has been mapped to the curriculum using test specifications and an item analysis, whichever is available, so it is clear what curricular objectives are addressed by the state test data. The same can be done for other assessments the district uses, such as district-developed benchmark assessments. Referencing all student achievement data back to the curriculum can help school and district leaders identify gaps in the available information on student learning. To view the other nine steps please see the entire article at: <http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/Use-of-Data.pdf>



### Connect to Resources

For additional resources, visit the critical question 2, fundamental practice #5 section of the toolkit.