

# RMCA INSTRUCTIONAL ACTION PLAN

## 2018-2019

### Our Mission:

RMCA exists to support parents in developing citizens of integrity and character who are equipped with a strong knowledge base and academic skills. The basis of this development is rooted in an academically rigorous, content-rich, classical educational program with Core Knowledge emphasis.

### Our Vision:

Creating culturally literate citizens who will impact their world for life, liberty, and justice.

## Academic Vision

The purpose of this document is to determine the outcomes and steps necessary for Rocky Mountain Classical Academy to continue the vision that we hold so dearly in the years to come. RMCA has a great history of providing the best educational option for our stakeholders. The purpose of this plan is to strengthen that vision and to create new avenues for attaining the mission that our community deserves. The administrative and instructional teams at RMCA firmly believe that by taking a look at where we have been, where we currently are, and where we wish to go, we can develop a plan of action, a road map, that the administrative team can use to implement this great undertaking. It is our philosophy that all students can learn at high levels and by using the Core Knowledge Curriculum and a Classical Approach to education, we

offer the best avenue for our students to reach that high level of learning.

A LITERATE CULTURE IS THE MOST  
DEMOCRATIC CULTURE IN OUR  
LAND

E.D. Hirsch

The first steps in the creation of this plan was to determine our core values and then the goals that would lead us to attainment of those core values. By centering our work around our deeply held core values, our path to academic success would be all the easier to attain.

Our school core values are as follows:

- All students can learn at high levels.
- RMCA exists to partner with parents in order to achieve high levels of classical learning for all students, as student education is the responsibility of parents.
- Rigorous Academics through the use of the Core Knowledge Sequence and other curricular tools that challenge students is a priority.
- Classical Education is the method and structure through which we will deliver our rich content.
- The most important factor in student learning is an effective teacher.
- It is the role of the instructor to close gaps and ensure that all students can achieve highly rigorous student outcomes.
- It is the role of the school administration to provide professional development, a plan of action, and accountability to student outcomes.

## OUR PHILOSOPHY

Rocky Mountain Classical Academy strives to embody the vision of “Creating culturally literate citizens who will impact their world for life, liberty, and justice.” This is the tenant that our classically trained educators live by. In the words of E.D Hirsch, a “Literate culture is the most democratic culture in our land: it excludes nobody; it cuts across generations and social groups and classes; it is not usually ones first culture, but it should be every ones second, existing as it does beyond the nearest fears of family, neighborhood, and region.” (Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 1988) As a Core Knowledge institution, RMCA strives to add citizens equipped to participate in that culturally literate body politic. This is what the educators and scholars at RMCA are dedicating their lives to.

- It is the role of the Board of Directors to provide positive governance that allows for our Core Values to be enacted.

Before we develop the map of our journey we must determine our destination. Our goals are as follows:

- Improve student proficiency (growth and scaled scores) in mathematics and language arts by 50% in five years.
- Improve student character, morals, and behavior through Capturing Kids Hearts.
- Improve teacher effectiveness through a rigorous accountability process.

## **Where We Are**

During the 2017-2018 school year the instructional team focused our professional development and accountability practice on developing a shared understating of research based best practices in the classroom, the implementation of a highly rigorous teacher evaluation program, and determining the framework for a learner centered professional development framework.

### **Guiding Questions**

What are the areas of greatest need, in order to improve student outcomes?

How does a core classical focus impact students on a daily basis?

How do we strengthen and buffer our core ideals of Core Knowledge and Classical education, in order to gain the largest impact on student outcomes?

Why are we seeing lower student growth than we have in the past?

The instructional team's focus was first and foremost on creating a Tier 1 Instructional program in order to see visual evidence of improving teacher effectiveness. A thorough process of teacher observation was conducted building-wide by the administrative and instructional teams in August of 2017. During this initial Instructional Round, the

team determined that there were three areas of high need: 1) the posting and alignment of daily learning targets and the process of demonstrating that learning in all core subjects, 2) directing teachers to focus on student engagement throughout the entirety of a lesson, creating active learners as opposed to passive ones, and 3) coaching teachers on how to effectively and consistently check for student understanding throughout the teaching process.

In order to implement these high value strategies, the instructional team focused professional development and evaluation expectations on attaining the goal of daily implementation by every teacher of these areas by end of year. This goal was met. Through extensive classroom observations and continual professional development, the instructional team was able to see extensive growth in these three growth measures.

As we enter the 2018-2019 school year, we must understand where we are in regards to our student population. The demographic picture of RMCA shows a student population that is: 15.7% free and reduced lunch, (this has remained consistent since the 2013-2014 school year), 2.4% of our students are English Language Learners, 30.9% minority population, 2.2% gifted and talented, and 6% of our students have a current IEP.

According to the DIBELs Assessment, the student cohort during the 15-16 school year in Kindergarten had 88% at or above benchmark at the end of the year. This same cohort entered 3rd grade during the 18-19 school year with 76% of students reaching benchmark. When looking at internal assessments we see much of the same picture. According to the DIBELS Benchmark assessment data from 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 school years, the three-year average percentage of students who improved their composite score from below benchmark to at/above benchmark is as follows: Kindergarten's average growth is 27%, 1st grade's average growth is 5%, 2nd grade's average

growth is -2%, 3 grade's average growth is 8%, 4th grade's average growth is 7%, and 5th grade's average growth 13%.

Looking at these metrics RMCA administration has developed the following strategic plan to address our areas of greatest need. We have determined that by focusing on four areas of academic need we can meet and exceed the yearly goals that are dictated by our core values and mission. This academic action plan will address how we can achieve growth by: 1) a focused and intensive purposeful writing program, 2) closing the reading gap, 3) improving student understating and conceptual thinking about mathematics, 4) and improving significant and measurable academic student achievement and growth on both internal and external assessments measures.

By focusing on these areas of greatest need, the RMCA instructional team will accomplish our overall goal of improving student outcomes. This is the primary role of our school. To effectively and quickly give all students the skills and knowledge they need to participate as a culturally literate citizen. This is the outcome that we desire. The action steps that follow and the timelines associated will lead us in the direction of attaining high levels of student readiness and achievement outcomes.

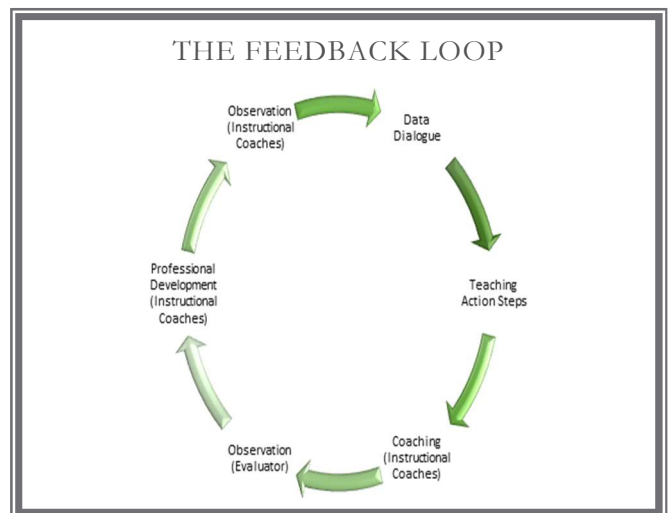
## The Action Steps

### Language Arts:

We will begin this process by aligning Colorado [State Standards](#) to our Core Knowledge Scope and Sequence. The process began with a school team that conducted and internal session of Instructional Rounds. This is a process used to determine a Problem of Practice for our teachers to focus on.

The first Instructional Rounds took place on 9/6/18. The teachers involved determined that the outcome of this process was that the lack of student outcomes can be tied directly to non-alignment of standards to our core instruction. This will be the focus of our instructional practice of the first part of the year. [The Instructional Rounds Action Plan](#) was given to the Building Leadership Team on 9/12/18, and was rolled out to staff on 9/21/18.

During data analysis of the RMCA reading gap the instructional team finds that by creating an intensity around the process of reading in the classroom we can begin to close that reading gap for all students. Reading needs to take place in all classrooms and all contents throughout the school day. The most effective way to improve students reading is to engage students in the act of consistent and purposeful reading. Focusing our energies on effective planning of reading strategies, professional development of research based best practices in reading, and a consistent feedback loop on reading, will help to develop instructional knowledge in best practice for school wide reading processes.



The research shows that students who have an intensive understanding of the role that writing plays in their learning have greater opportunities in all aspects of their life. Both colleges and

employers are now shifting their focus to students that have a solid grasp of both verbal and written communication. This solid foundation helps students develop judgment and confidence and equips them to more fully contribute to the world. We must address this writing gap. By focusing classroom instructional time, teacher professional development, and creating curricular focus on the skills needed and the time to write we will close those gaps. RMCA is beginning a re-implementation of normed and common writing assessments for every grade level every quarter, tied to grade level writing rubrics. The data collected will be used to develop instructional practices to improve and further implement writing centered instruction in all content areas.

#### **Strategy:**

- Using writing as a means to focus reading comprehension and improving student understating
- School wide alignment of the Core Knowledge Scope and Sequence and Colorado State Standards
- Focus professional development on standards alignment, lesson design, and effective instructional strategies
- Undertake a school wide data analysis to determine areas of greatest need and continued growth assessment

#### **Mathematics:**

During the 2017-2018 school year, the administrative team determined that the current math program in use at RMCA, *SAXON Math*<sup>™</sup>, was not delivering the student outcomes desired by our core values. The instructional team conducted a thorough program evaluation of *SAXON*<sup>™</sup> to determine next steps in our math curriculum. The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine the degree to which our K-8 math curriculum was resulting in the desired student outcomes of our community on both internal and

state math measures. After an exhaustive two-month program evaluation and new program research process, the team made the decision to move away from *SAXON Math*<sup>™</sup> and implement *Singapore Math*<sup>™</sup> as the K-6 math curriculum, starting the 2018-2019, school year. RMCA will conduct a rolling implementation during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years for seventh and eighth grades respectively.

For the 2018-2019 school year, RMCA instructional coaches will focus professional development on the fundamentals of teaching *Singapore Math*<sup>™</sup>. Continued and persistent PD in the form of math cohorts and school wide instructional practices will be conducted during all professional development days. RMCA will leverage the internal Math Committee and D49 math leadership cohort to begin the professional development process of shifting Math Mindset away from procedural math to conceptual math. This shifting mindset is key to a full implementation of rigorous math learning by all students.

#### **Professional Development:**

The most effective thing school administrators can have an impact on is teacher professional development. A core area where this strategic plan can have an immediate and focused impact, is in the areas of staff professional development. Ongoing professional development for the 2018-2019 school year will consist of 1) a foundational understanding of the Core Knowledge Scope and Sequence, 2) teacher training on how to align Core Knowledge Content to CO State Standards, 3) effective lesson design and implementation, 4) the implementation of the Singapore Math Curriculum, 5) Seven Steps to a language Rich Classroom, 6) the implementation of school wide common

writing rubrics and assessments, and 7) the effective use of Capturing Kids Hearts strategies.

Professional Development for the 2018-2019 school year will be centered around the leverage points of standards based instruction, effective lesson design, effective lesson delivery, and understanding and closing achievement gaps. This professional development started with a Core Knowledge consultant, delivering a staff wide PD on [Core Knowledge](#) alignment with [State Standards](#) on September 21. Staff will be provided with actionable student data on a weekly basis. Staff are presented with documentation on the alignment of [State Standards](#) and [Core Knowledge Scope and Sequence](#). Grade Level lesson design templates will be created by the staff in order to align instructional planning practices.

The instructional team has also concluded that we must determine professional development needs in a new way, one in which is focused on individual teacher needs, one that is reactive to those needs, and one that can be implemented rapidly in order to improve teacher practices in short time periods. We call this Rapid Reactive Professional Development. RRPD is run by school Instructional Coaches, Administrative evaluators, and teacher leaders. This RRPD is now considered part of the evaluation and observation feedback loop. As teachers set goals in data meetings with Instructional Coaches, coaches are then able to align instructional material, conversations, and formulate action steps with the teachers. Teachers then implement instructional practices in their classrooms and are observed and given feedback by Instructional Coaches and their administrative evaluator. At this time, administrators are then able to request and align professional development by the Instructional Coaches in order to meet the specific needs of the teacher. The teacher, then has

the opportunity to participate in this professional development, and then implement new learning with the assistance of the instructional team. RMCA's Rapid Reactive Professional Development is being implemented this year. The strategic plan will continue to refine and implement this process throughout the evolution of this plan.

## **Student Teacher Relationships:**

One of the most effective factors in improving student outcomes is the relational capacity between students and their teachers. During the 2018-2019, teacher university professional development series, all current staff members were trained in [Capturing Kids Hearts](#). CKH has become our foundational approach to student teacher relationships and the cornerstone of our discipline process. Our daily goals center around teachers building relationships with students in order to keep them engaged, on task, and in the classroom. We know that a student that feels cared for and listened too will perform at higher levels. Teacher-student relationships are key to improving student outcomes.

## **Instructional Rounds:**

One of the key factors in improving teacher effectiveness, and in turn student outcomes is having teachers identify a building problem of practice. In August of 2018, a team of 14 staff members and administrators conducted a day of "Instructional Rounds." Instructional Rounds is the process of teacher leaders conducting and analyzing observation data and making inferences about student learning based on that data. Teachers then discuss the improvement process and identify next steps for improving student learning outcomes, resulting in a problem of practice.

The team began with a theory of action that stated, if all RMCA staff have common training and knowledge of Core Knowledge and State Standards-based instruction in all content areas; purposeful backwards planning; research-based instructional strategies; and professional learning community opportunities ...then all students will be at grade level or higher and there will be an increase in staff and student retention. After conducting a day of classroom observations, implementing a root cause analysis, and personal instructional reflection the Instructional Rounds team determined a new problem of practice for the RMCA Staff to focus their work on. This POP states: *If teachers plan purposeful, rigorous and aligned lessons with Core Knowledge and State Standards, then students will have increased learning outcomes.* The Building Leadership Team and Instructional Leaders then set to do the work of creating an [action plan](#) needed to implement the process of fixing the problem of practice. Our task for 2018-2019 school year will be to implement this action plan. Instructional Rounds will become a twice yearly practice for the remainder of this action plan.

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### **Teacher Evaluation:**

The new teacher evaluation rubric and observation process was implemented during the 2017-2018 school year. This process culminated with over 500 classroom observations, firm data that teachers were implementing the agreed upon instructional strategies, and a firm reliance on professional

development process. For the 2018-2019 school year and this action plan, this process needed to be evaluated and refined in order to meet our student outcome goals. The Administrative team determined that the focus on our instructional strategies from the previous year needed continued implementation. The process now requires the instructional team to implement three new aspects of the teacher evaluation process: 1) Teacher observation forms needed to be re-aligned to the building Problem of Practice, evaluation of student work, and alignment of Core Knowledge and CO State Standards, 2) All certified staff members are required to participate in 60 hours of professional development throughout the year aligned to our school goals and core values, and 3) Teacher goals and professional development will be aligned to student data and student outcomes. The Teacher Evaluation Process at RMCA will continue to evolve as this Action Plan is implemented. As we progress, administration and teacher evaluation will be based on student outcomes, professional development will become an embedded aspect of staff work agreements, and salary and bonus scales will be tied to student outcomes.

### **Data Analysis:**

For the 2018-2019 school year, the instructional team has implemented the Data Wise process. This process will help teachers to implement standards and Core Knowledge aligned instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of their students and their gaps. By focusing teacher data dialogue on high impact student centered strategies, teachers can focus on measurable and attainable student outcomes. The instructional team will conduct a root cause analysis using CMAS, DIBELs, STAR 360, and common formative assessment to determine where student outcomes are failing short and the metrics used to close those gaps.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN  
2017-2022

Implementation Timeline					
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Academic Vision	<p>Implementation of researched based instructional strategies</p> <p>Conduct Program Evaluation of Saxon Math</p>	<p>Conduct Instructional Rounds to determine Problem of Practice</p> <p>Implement Singapore Math Curriculum</p> <p>Implementation of Backwards Planning Lesson plans and Standards Alignment</p> <p>Implementation of Data Driven Instruction and Goals</p> <p>Conduct Program Evaluation of CKLA Curriculum</p> <p>Conduct <a href="#">School Self-Assessment of Core Knowledge</a></p> <p>Conduct School Self-Assessment on the <a href="#">Classical Approach</a></p>	<p>Conduct Series of Instructional Rounds to determine needs and School Wide Problem of Practice</p> <p>Begin implementation of Understanding by Design Planning Process</p> <p>Focus Instructional Practices on Classical Education Best Practices</p> <p>Conduct Program Evaluation of Singapore Math</p> <p>Conduct Technology Program Evaluation</p>	<p>Full implementation of Understanding by Design</p> <p>Full Academic Program Evaluation</p> <p>Full Standards Alignment Program Evaluation</p>	<p>Full implementation of Core Precepts of Academic Vision: Understanding By Design, Singapore Math, Classical focus on English Language Arts,</p>

<p>Becoming Data Wise</p>	<p>Weekly Data Meetings</p>	<p>Implementation of Data Wise Process</p> <p>Implementation of Middle School Data Meetings</p> <p>Student Growth Data tied to Principal Evaluation</p>	<p>Strategic connection of Student Growth Data to Instructional Practice</p> <p>Student Growth Data tied to Administration Evaluation</p>	<p>Student Growth data tied to teacher evaluation</p> <p>Teacher evaluation data tied to bonus pay structure</p>	<p>Teacher evaluation data tied to bonus pay structure and teacher tenure</p>
<p>Professional Development</p>	<p>Implementation of teaching strategies PD</p> <p>Refine roles of Instructional Coaches</p>	<p>Implement Mandatory PD process for staff</p> <p>Hire Instructional Coaching Staff to implement all PD</p> <p>Focus PD on CKH, Singapore Math, Instructional Strategies, and Lesson Planning</p>	<p>Embed Mandatory PD process for staff in Work Agreement</p> <p>Implement Rapid Reactive Professional Development Process</p> <p>Create aligned Professional Learning Community Protocols for all staff</p>	<p>Align Professional Development process to national standard</p> <p>Full implementation of PLC</p>	<p>RMCA house regional Professional Development for CK and Classical Schools</p>
<p>Student Discipline and Character Programs</p>	<p>Create and Implement Due Process structures to meet national Standards</p> <p>Implementation of Middle School Order System</p> <p>Full Time Dean of Students Position to Oversee Student Discipline Services</p> <p>Begin Implementation</p>	<p>Implementation of Year 1 Capturing Kids Hearts</p> <p>Refinement of Middle School Order System</p> <p>Create Administrator (AD) role for character programming</p> <p>Implementation of Sources of Strength character program</p>	<p>Implementation of Year 2 Capturing Kids Hearts</p> <p>Implementation of CKH Teen Leadership</p> <p>Conduct Middle School Order Program Evaluation</p> <p>Conduct School Wide Historical Student Behavior Audit</p>	<p>Begin Process for Capturing Kids hearts National Showcase School</p>	<p>National Showcase School - Capturing Kids Hearts</p>



	<p>of Sources of Strength character program</p> <p>Implementation of eS2S Character Program</p>	<p>Refinement of Board Policy reflecting Due Process and student behavior</p> <p>Continued Assessment of Student Behavior data</p>			
<p>Assessment Portfolio</p>	<p>Implement DIBELS Assessment and Data Analysis protocols</p> <p>Implement STAR Assessment Portfolio</p> <p>Implementation of DIBELS Deep</p> <p>Implementation of COgAt</p>	<p>Full Implementation of STAR Assessment</p> <p>Implementation of DIBELS K-6</p> <p>Implementation of school-wide quarterly writing assessment</p> <p>Pilot Implementation of <a href="#">Classical Learning Test</a> in eighth grade</p> <p>Implementation of Core Knowledge Assessment 2-8</p> <p>Implementation of School wide Quarterly Writing Prompts</p>	<p>Full Implementation of Classical Learning Test for all Eighth graders</p> <p>Full Implementation of Core Knowledge School Assessment</p> <p>Pilot Implementation of DIBELS Math Assessment K-3</p>	<p>Program Evaluation of STAR Testing</p> <p>Program Evaluation of DIBELS Math</p>	<p>Program Evaluation Assessment Portfolio</p>