

# ***DODGE CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL***



## ***Teaching & Learning***

Activate - Connect - Affirm

***Fundamentals  
of Biography***

***Fundamentals  
of Language***

## ***Critical Reflection***

Access - Engagement - Hope

# ***Biography Driven Instruction***

# DODGE CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL

## Biography-Driven Instruction

### **Meeting Kansas Can Initiatives**

Despite the willingness of many classroom teachers to accommodate the unique assets and needs of EL students, the Kansas Can initiative requires that schools need to be reorganized around the student, not the systems. Furthermore the Kansas Can states “We must find a way for equity and common sense to coexist.” While academics are and will remain important, students who lack nonacademic skills, such as conscientiousness, perseverance and the ability to collaborate and communicate, will struggle both in the pursuit of postsecondary education and in the workforce. When we look at achievement levels over the past three years we are finding a continuous achievement discrepancy among our ESL population who are not meeting the Kansas Can initiatives.

### **Achievement Discrepancies**

These achievement discrepancies maybe further compounded at the middle level by organizational constraints such as multiple subject-area teachers per student, lack of staff trained in ESL teaching strategies, and a dearth of research in the area of content-area (versus basic language) instruction for EL students.

Given the persistent achievement gap between EL students and their English fluent peers, this proposal seeks to answer the following question:

- How can we create teaching and learning environments that promote the types of classroom conditions and situations at the elementary and secondary levels that research suggests are critical for second language acquisition and content learning?

Underlying this question is the assumption that effective teaching environments reflect culturally responsive teaching, often referred to as culturally responsive pedagogy. Such teaching recognizes the importance of including students’ cultural references in all aspects of the learning process and building upon the cultural knowledge and prior experiences of EL students to make instruction as appropriate and effective as possible.

## **An Imperative Initiative**

To initiate a learning environment designed for individual students we must first think of the type of student who attends our school. Then we must ask ourselves what guides our instruction to meet individual student needs? If we are truly a student centered school then we must ask the essential questions on how we as a school are addressing those needs. We must ask ourselves if the educational programs and the curriculum come before the learner? To what extent do we consider our knowledge of learners as integral to teaching and learning? What goals can be achieved, questions be posed, and policies be challenged, if we let go of excuses and the old way of teaching. To these essential questions a new vision for learners must follow if we are to truly focus on student centered learning. It will be our intent to meet this new vision by building a bridge from middle school to high school that is:

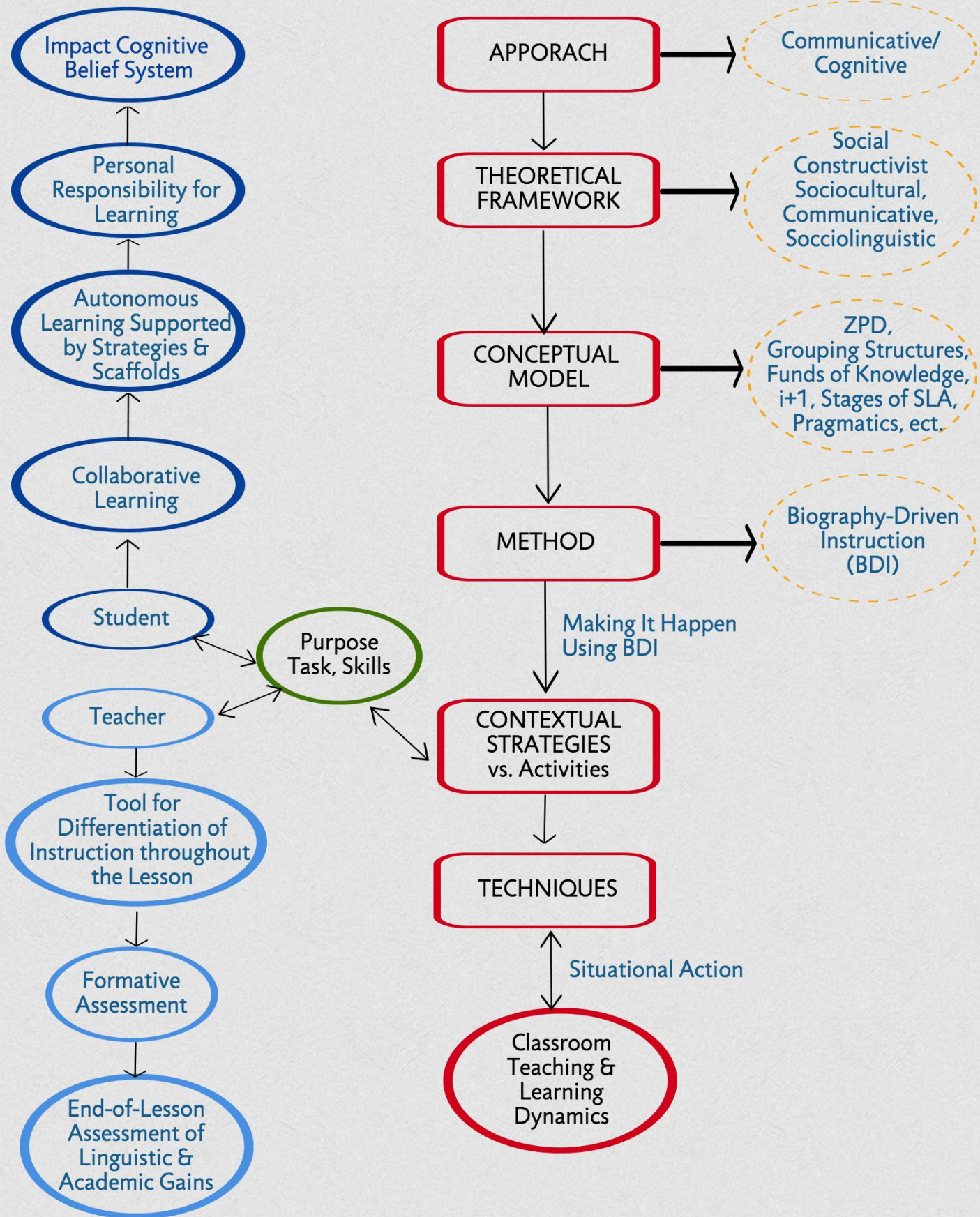
- grounded in kids belief in themselves and their capacities to succeed
- supported by strategies kids can use to be successful in Middle School
- paved with prior successes in authentic tasks, formatively assessed

## **Goal: Biography Driven Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Our goal then would be to take into account each individual student's background knowledge, (b) create an instructional ecology that fosters growth from the known to the unknown, and (c) provide a "space" for each student to individually demonstrate his or her learning at the end of the lesson. With emphasis on all four dimensions of the CLD student biography (sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, academic), biography-driven culturally responsive teaching addresses the limited attention currently devoted to second language learning issues in the literature and research of culturally responsive pedagogy. To address this goal would be to provide support for teachers within weekly scheduled professional learning communities to address student centered lesson design.



# BIOGRAPHY-DRIVEN INSTRUCTION FLOWCHART



## **Teachers as Designers of Learning**

When teachers are designers of learning they take into considerations multiple levels of knowledge obtainment. They capture the levels of knowledge obtainment and scaffold skills sets that can be directly applied to cultural backgrounds and task that become reusable literacy skills. To be a designer of learning is when the teacher no longer thinks first about an activity that supports direct instruction. They investigate the biographies of their learners and then consider how best to plan their instruction to capitalize on student assets and meet each learner's unique needs. They create a low-risk learning environment in which students know that the knowledge and skills that they bring to the lesson will be maximized in the learning process. They strategically configure grouping arrangements based on the task and what they know about each student's sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic background. Teachers are transparent about their instruction: they share with students the roadmap for the lesson, including lesson objectives, activities, and the overall plan for how the learning community will achieve the lesson goals.

## **Implementation and Outside Resources**

To develop a student centered biography driven learning environment we will need support. This type support comes with a partnership between school and university. In our proposal we have accomplished the first and second step in the process. The first step was to create a Multi-Tiered Student System (MTSS) built into the schedule to address individual levels of achievement. The second step was to create a schedule for professional learning communities to meet with instructional coaches at least two times per week with tier II instructors and four times per week with tier III instructors.

To accomplish the third step in the process would be to seek an outside expert and to design an implementation framework to ensure teachers are receiving the support they need to be designers of learning. We have identified an outside university resource that would be willing to help facilitate our implementation of Biography based lesson planning. The total cost for their services would be \$4,000.00 per day and we would be asking for 4 days in the school year for onsite training and collaboration. This amount would also include one monthly distant learning contact with the teams and communications with instructional coaches assigned to the project. The dates associated with site visits and collaboration would occur on the following days.

- August 10, 2017 – All Day In-service
- October 26, 2017 – A.M. Professional Learning Community Time
- December 13, 2017 A.M. Professional Learning Community Time
- February 14, 2018 A.M. Professional Learning Community Time

Throughout the implementation process, faculty in-services will be provided in BDI. The implementation process will focus on, strategies, and techniques through classroom observations, student artifacts, and teacher support time. The goal of the support time will be to enhance teacher and instructional coaching capacities for culturally responsive teaching. Teacher instructional support will include methods in asking students relevant and responsive questions, utilizing strategies as tools in the classroom, and reaching students in new ways. Title I and newcomer teachers who are selected to participate, will be given multiple instructional strategies on effective classroom practices in how to let go and allow students' assets, needs, and responses in both designing and delivering a BDI lesson.

#### **Budget:**

Funding for this project is available and consistent with the parameters of each grant. Payment to the consultant will not be in one lump sum. The consultant will be paid in installments based on the day worked. Additionally, the book *Biography-Driven Culturally Responsive Teaching* (Herrera, 2016) will be purchased for each participant, and salary will be paid for participants attending the all-day in-service on August 10<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, a total of \$22,370.00 has been budgeted for the complete task. The funding sources have been identified and listed.

#### **Total Cost: \$22,370.00**

<b>Fund</b>	<b>Account</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Bilingual	8-10-1000-321-00-000	\$15,500.00
Migrant	8-51-2200-320-00-000	250.00
Title III	8-52-2200-320-00-000	250.00
Bilingual (Salaries)	8-10-1000-119-00-802	4,000.00
Bilingual (30 Books)	8-10-1000-606-00-000	870.00
Bilingual (Travel)	8-10-2210-582-00-000	1,500.00