“Our Pyramid of Interventions is a proven, systemic approach to meeting the needs of the whole child,” Superintendent Rosa Blackwell said. “It’s the right tool to guide our teachers and staff so that every child succeeds academically and behaviorally.”

Starting in January, the Pyramid of Interventions will roll out to CPS teachers and principals, and, eventually, to all employees who interact with students. It will empower staff to serve the district’s diverse student population in a more systematic, data-driven, prevention-focused and collaborative way.

And, to do it, staff will not have to learn new programs or drop existing programs.

The Pyramid of Interventions began in district meetings about two years ago, when Blackwell asked that students’ academic needs and behavioral needs be approached in an integrated way. Traditionally, educators have addressed these two areas separately.

At the time, the Ohio Department of Education was in the early stages of launching and evaluating a program called the Ohio Integrated Systems Model (OISM), based on a three-tiered intervention model endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education. Its integrated approach was exactly what Blackwell sought, and, with some adaptation by CPS, became the Pyramid of Interventions.

The Pyramid’s three tiers represent progressive levels of support — schoolwide, targeted and intensive. Research shows that strong schoolwide instruction — the pyramid’s bottom and largest tier — leads to success academically and behaviorally for 80 to 90 percent of students. The middle or targeted tier, provides strategies for helping students who still are struggling, about 5 to 10 percent of students. Strong initiatives at the lower two tiers greatly reduce the number of students needing the top tier, or intensive intervention, about 1 to 5 percent.

(Continued on back page)
SUCCESS IN SCHOOLS: Principals and teachers using CPS’ Pyramid of Interventions report dramatic improvements in academic achievement and in schools’ overall cultures.

Aiken College and Career High School

In August 2006, in a breakthrough move, academics weren’t taught for a few days at Aiken College and Career High School. Instead, students learned behavioral expectations, procedures and protocols.

“Otherwise, we would constantly spend time on behavior all year, at the expense of academics,” Principal Eric Thomas said.

Today, discipline violations and fighting incidents both are down by 50 percent at Aiken College and Career, and Pyramid training continues with the goal of improving the school’s academic performance.

Thomas had gone through training on Ohio’s three-tiered intervention model while in the Middletown school district, was aware of its power and was delighted to learn that the training and planning process already had begun when he became the school’s principal in 2005-06.

Students wear uniforms to help minimize distractions and set a different tone. Discussions in Pyramid training led to a ban on student cell phones. A “Caught Doing Good” program now awards good behavior, with school announcements and letters mailed home to delighted parents, Thomas said.

“The building just kind of settled a little,” Thomas said, enabling the school to focus on schoolwide initiatives.

As training continued, the school team decided to focus on more accountability at the staff level. Better ways to engage students and make lessons relevant were identified, along with initiatives to teach what good behavior looks like.

Too often, Thomas said, adults punish young people for not doing something right, “without ever actually teaching them how in the first place.”

“In the midst of doing things differently,” Thomas said, “we not only brought the behavioral situation under control, we’ve increased our academic performance index by 5 percent — a positive trend, and we’re proud of that.”

Academy of World Languages

Staff at the Academy of World Languages (AWL) spent a year training and planning to put the Pyramid of Interventions into action.

The school team, under the guidance of school psychologist Dr. Amy Harris, tackled behavior issues first, said Principal Jackie Rowedder, who joined AWL in 2003. Pyramid training in collaborative problem-solving led to a schoolwide set of “Big Expectations” — be respectful, be responsible, be problem-solvers — plus specific methods to teach and model correct behavior in all areas of school life.

It worked. Discipline referrals and incidents are down by 50 percent. “The number of discipline issues are at a calmer level now,” Rowedder said.

Academics were next. More training led the team to tackle literacy skills, implementing the Voyager program for grades K-3 as the lynchpin of the schoolwide initiatives and to initiate new organizational structures.

“Pyramid training led us to change our system to make it work for every student,” Rowedder said.

Seven school committees were formed, all focused on the Pyramid, with every teacher on a committee. “I’d venture to say my staff would tell you they love it, see it as effective and believe that they now have the tools to change things,” Rowedder said.

Students now enter first grade better prepared, according to benchmark testing. The school has moved up two designations into Continuous Improvement on the Ohio Report Card, with the goal to become an Effective school.

Rowedder’s advice to teachers and principals: “Do the training, spend the planning time and stay committed. It will work.”

“...MY STAFF WOULD TELL YOU THEY LOVE IT, SEE IT AS EFFECTIVE AND BELIEVE THAT THEY NOW HAVE THE TOOLS TO CHANGE THINGS.”

- Principal Jackie Rowedder, AWL
PYRAMID FRAMES LEVELS OF SUPPORT FOR ALL LEARNERS

An interview with Markay Winston, Ph.D., Director of CPS’ Student Services

WHAT IS THE PYRAMID OF INTERVENTIONS?

The Pyramid of Interventions is CPS’ adaptation of a nationally proven framework; a systematic, three-tier approach for meeting academic and behavioral needs of all students, in an integrated way. This approach includes not just teachers and principals, but everyone involved with our students — cafeteria and custodial staff, school nurses, parents, community partners, even bus drivers.

The Pyramid’s foundation consists of six areas where our training will focus (standards-based practices; data-based decision making; culturally responsive practices; academic and behavior supports; explicit instruction of academic and social skills; and collaborative strategic planning).

WHERE DID THIS FRAMEWORK ORIGINATE?

The three-tiered model began in the special-education arena. It proved so successful in identifying and meeting most children’s needs that the U.S. Department of Education endorsed it for use with all children. The Ohio Department of Education’s version is the Ohio Integrated Systems Model, used in about 30 percent of Ohio’s districts.

WHY DO WE NEED ANOTHER INITIATIVE?

The Pyramid of Interventions is not another initiative but a framework for implementing existing initiatives in a systematic, integrated way. It’s also a filter to evaluate what we are doing now or might do in the future. We know we are not meeting the needs of 100 percent of our students. Few are, but districts implementing the three-tiered model are getting there faster.

WHAT ARE THE ROLLOUT PLANS?

During January through May, the Instructional Support Teams, along with principals and lead teachers, will conduct training at every school. This will be a three-year rollout, with the schoolwide tier as the focus first, and then the targeted and intensive tiers in years two and three.

WILL EVERY SCHOOL DO THE SAME THING?

While there are core components that apply to every school, there is room for flexibility. Remember, this is a framework, with proven tools and supports, for schools to use in designing their own plans based on students’ needs and each school’s culture.

HOW WILL RESULTS BE MEASURED?

We’ve taken each of the six areas in the pyramid’s foundation and created observable, measurable tasks. Implementation and results have proven to go hand-in-hand with this model. So if a school is implementing at a high level, we’ll see it in the school’s data and outcomes — discipline referrals down, more children participating in general-education classes, more children passing achievement tests. Those results will be part of measurements already under way in Building Futures, the strategic plan — again, underscoring that this is a framework for everything we’re already doing.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

We’ll see most students’ needs met by the schoolwide programs, far fewer disciplinary referrals, improved school ratings, far fewer students needing targeted and intense support, more time and resources available to help children still struggling, and we’ll see everyone motivated to refine the framework as needs evolve.
PROVEN FRAMEWORK HELPS
(Continued from page 1)

Dr. Markay Winston, CPS’ director of student services, views it as the framework within which all district-sanctioned initiatives fit.

“The Pyramid includes every single student,” she said, “with prevention programs to sustain performance for those doing well, and identification methods and successive levels of intervention for those needing more support — all while supporting existing programs.”

Research suggests the three-tiered model will help make possible the district’s vision of providing high-quality learning opportunities for every student.

“If Building Futures is our road map, the Pyramid of Interventions is a critical portion of the highway leading to the superintendent’s goal of academic, social and emotional success for every student,” Winston said. “It’s the logical next step.”

For more information visit:
www.cps-k12.org
(click on General Information)

E-mail your thoughts about this Strategic Plan Spotlight to
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PYRAMID OF INTERVENTIONS

Academic Systems

Tier III: Intensive, Individual Interventions (1%-5%)
- Individual students
- Assessment-based
- High intensity

Tier II: Targeted Group Interventions (5%-10%)
- Some students (at-risk)
- High efficiency
- Rapid response

Tier I: Schoolwide Interventions (80%-90%)
- Core instruction
- All students
- Preventative, proactive

Behavioral Systems

Tier III: Intensive, Individual Interventions (1%-5%)
- Individual students
- Assessment-based
- Intense, durable procedures

Tier II: Targeted Group Interventions (5%-10%)
- Some students (at-risk)
- High efficiency
- Rapid response

Tier I: Schoolwide Interventions (80%-90%)
- Core instruction
- All students
- Preventative, proactive