***SYSTEMS THINKING***

Systems thinking is referred to a revolutionary approach in creating a cohesive and comprehensive plan in improving the academic performance of our students in the United States as it relates to the increasing academic standards that the federal law, No Child Left Behind mandates. The schema associated with this approach that brings all the stakeholders involved in the effort of improving our students’ academic performance was popularized by the prolific author, Peter Senge. The characteristics associated with the systems thinking include: vision, standards, assessment, accountability, alignment, climate, collaborative Relationships, and continuous improvement. These facets which comprise the systemic approach to improving how our students perform in the classroom form the basis for which educators can ensure that the students will rise to the level of academic competence in the classroom which the federal government demands.

The various stakeholders responsible for putting the systems thinking philosophy place have changed “the way that things are done around here.” In other words, the culture of the manner in which students are taught has changed. Historically, whereas the Board of Education and their agent, the superintendent, which puts board policy in effect, have traditionally accepted the notion that some students were destined for college and the rest of the children should be relegated to the factories and similar positions in our society. Today, all children are expected to succeed by earning a high school diploma. The systems approach designates how the increasing academic expectations can be achieved toward that end.

The factors involved with the systems approach provide a comprehensive plan to ensure that our students are successful in the classroom and ultimately graduate high school. First, leaders in this process of affecting positive change must have a vision for the educational process. Having a vision allows everyone in this process to keep their sights on the specific goals required to enable our students to be successful in the classroom; similarly, a mission brings into play the values and beliefs that guide the behavior of the group toward that end. The systems approach also presents the performance standards that emphasize specifics of how well students can achieve the academic competence. Also, stakeholders need to assess the results of how well the students are performing and other factors in the educational process; it is an important to utilize the standards, assess what works and how to improve other areas that are lacking. In order to improve instruction, it is imperative to obtain information, utilize the data in order to give feedback, and guide instruction. The systems approach holds individuals accountable to uphold their responsibilities in the educational process. In order to improve instruction, it is paramount to be specific about how to improve the instruction, and align programs to the available budget. Moreover, collaborative relationships must be present to come together as a team of individuals in order to share ideas that can help in the arduous task of helping our students. Finally, it is a never-ending task to pay attention to the “customer” or the students and always be present to advocate ways to encourage how the process can be improved on a continuous basis.

The systems approach in improving the educational process through which our students demonstrate what they know and achieve a high school diploma is a viable way of monitoring how each of the various stakeholders can contribute toward that end. The board of education is charged with creating the policies, and other educators are responsible for putting the policies into operation. There are several characteristics that is featured in the systems approach that require standardization and specific steps that provide a comprehensive plan to ensure that every child can be academic success.