



## Guidance Document: Curriculum Writing

### Before you Begin

#### Guiding Principles:

When we think about the work that we do in schools, we must always start by considering what our purpose is. While the nature of school is changing, and in many ways our purpose, we must always start a review of academic practice by questioning ourselves. This idea is not new. Ralph W. Tyler, in his book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1969), outlines four questions that must be answered so that curriculum writing can effectively take place. The four guiding questions are:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

Tyler emphasizes the notion that schools should focus on the development of learning experiences that appropriately challenge and meet students' needs and interests. As you begin the curriculum writing process, consider what the students in your schools need in terms of academic, social, and emotional development. Then, think about the typical areas of interest within your community that can be leveraged for increased student engagement. Tyler writes, "In general, the learner learns only those things which he does. If the school situations deal with matters of interest to the learner he will actively participate in them and thus learn to deal effectively with these situations" (11). As Kansas begins to encourage schools to rethink how they 'do school', applying the state redesign principles to your curriculum is a strong first step toward improvement.



The four principles under Kansas's vision for redesign include:

1. Personalized Learning
2. Community Partnerships
3. Student Success Skills
4. Real World Application

Tyler goes on to outline four characteristics of learning experiences that adequately meet objectives tied to students' areas of need and interest. Tyler claims you need:

1. Learning experiences to develop skill in thinking.
2. Learning experiences helpful in acquiring information.
3. Learning experiences helpful in developing social attitudes.
4. Learning experiences helpful in developing interests.

Thus, as you begin to review and write your curriculum, consider the learning experiences your curriculum is calling for and how well they build students' capacity for critical thinking, personal growth, and academic interests.

### **Defining Curriculum:**

While the dictionary might define curriculum as the *courses* offered by an academic institution, in the world of education, we often think of curriculum as the academic *content* taught in those courses. The Glossary of Education Reform notes:

“...curriculum typically refers to the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the learning standards or learning objectives they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course; and the tests, assessments, and other methods used to evaluate student learning” ([Great Schools Partnership](#), 2015).

While curriculum can be summarized as ‘what is taught’, we know that what is taught is not always what is learned. Academic theorists have outlined different types/levels of curriculum that operate under the general umbrella of curriculum. Two leading definitions of curriculum come from the work of Klein, Tye, and Goodlad and Elliot Eisner. Klein, Tye, and Goodlad suggest that there are five levels to your curriculum: the ideal, formal, perceived, operational, and experiential.



**Ideal Curriculum-** This can be summarized as the curriculum offered by the government or the state. In Kansas, we do not espouse a curriculum in regards to content, rather we suggest that curriculum be grounded in our state standards for the content area.

**Formal Curriculum-** The formal curriculum is the curriculum that is approved by a governing body. This governing body can be the state and the district. While the state board approves the standards we as an educational agency provide, your district will also approve the use of the standards, the curriculum maps written by your staff, and the resources adopted to facilitate your content instruction. (Note- A resource is not your curriculum; a resource is a tool for working through your curriculum.) The standards function within your formal curriculum by outlining what students should know and be able to do. Lalor (2016) breaks the standards into three categories: process, content, and disposition. Process standards focus on skills and strategies, content standards focus on content or subject specific skills, and disposition standards address ways of thinking or habits of mind. Your formal curriculum is thus comprised of instruction around these three things.

**Perceived Curriculum-**  
This is the curriculum that teachers believe they are to teach. Once a formal curriculum is established by your governing body, teachers then move forward with the perceived curriculum. This is the element of the curriculum that calls for quality professional development for teachers.

**Operational Curriculum-** The operational curriculum is the curriculum that is executed in the classroom (i.e. what is taught).

**Experiential Curriculum-** This is the curriculum that students experience in the classroom. At this level, students begin making meaning from what has been taught. At this level, you can evaluate the rigor, value, and effectiveness of the preceding levels of curriculum. Meaning, if what students learn does not meet the expectations of your state, district, or teacher teams, then a curriculum review and revision may be necessary.



Elliot Eisner viewed school systems as being akin to an ecological system. Meaning, schools operate within their own environment which is home to various individuals, resources, patterns, and threats. Thus, if one essential element of the ecosystem is changed then shifts and changes will occur and be felt by every other entity within the system. When looking at curriculum, Eisner discussed three types of curriculum that influence the learning that occurs in the classroom.

<b>Explicit Curriculum-</b> The explicit curriculum is what your local board of education has adopted and what your school and educators then teach in the classroom. This is often derived from to your district-mandated curriculum guidelines and standards.	
<b>Implicit Curriculum-</b> This is often referred to as the ‘hidden curriculum’. The implicit curriculum is that which is taught through: the school’s culture, the community’s values and beliefs, peer groups, relationships with teachers, etc. It is important to note the implicit curriculum can be learned either consciously or unconsciously.	<b>Null Curriculum-</b> The null curriculum is that which is not taught in our schools; the null curriculum can also be that which is under taught in schools. Historically, character development, the arts, and even modes of thinking have not been a focus of our instruction. As we begin to focus on social emotional growth as one of our state goals, the importance of the null curriculum will continue to grow.

This document is meant to help guide school and district level teams through the process of writing and evaluating their curriculum. This document attempts to synthesize current literature on curriculum writing and mapping which can be used to help launch local efforts in these areas. A list of resources is provided throughout this document; these resources can be used by schools to establish a curriculum protocol. This guide is not meant to take the place of the many curriculum resources publicly available; however, it is meant to expose school and district curriculum leaders to the process of curriculum writing while offering guidance and support.

See *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (Tyler, 1969)

See “Five Perspectives of the Economic Education Curriculum” (Rhodes, 1978)

See “Instructional and Expressive Educational Objectives: Their Formulation and Use in Curriculum” (Eisner, 1967)



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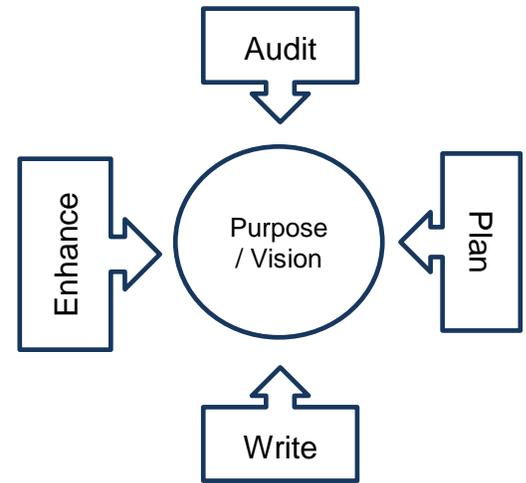
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## Writing Curriculum:

### Audit Current Curriculum Map

**Tip:** Auditing your current curriculum map does not have to be extensive or exhaustive. While many steps are described, this can be done throughout the year to precede the curriculum writing that will happen at the end of the year. Review the steps, and create an audit system that works for your school/district.

#### 1. Create grade-level teams to evaluate how the current curriculum is being implemented across grades.

##### a. How do you create a professional learning community?

- i. [Tuckman Model of Team Development](#) (Cross & Joftus)

<p>1- <b>Forming-</b> During this initial phase, leaders are gathering the members of the team and educating them on the vision and mission of the team. This is referred to as the 'learning' stage. Members learn about their work, their teammates, and their role within the team.</p>	<p>2- <b>Storming-</b> This is the <i>doing</i> phase. This is when the team should work to share ideas, concepts, and opinions. When it comes to curriculum writing, this stage will occur at the onset of each step. Staff will have to decide how to move through each phase. In order for the work to be effective, team members will have to reach consensus.</p>
<p>3- <b>Norming-</b> Reaching consensus, in many ways, summarizes the norming phase. During this phase, team members must agree on their goals and strategies.</p>	<p>4- <b>Performing-</b> At this point, the team will begin to do the work they have set out to do. They will work independently and collaboratively. Checkpoints should be laid out in advance with objectives to be discussed at each meeting.</p>



**b. How do you grow teachers into leaders?**

- i. The "[Transformational Leadership Framework](#)", published by New Leaders (2016), outlines three stages principals and schools can work through when growing teachers into leaders.
  1. In the first phase, principals are exposing educators to potential leadership opportunities within the school and field that may be new to teachers. Principals are establishing a shared vision and finding teachers who take part in actualizing the mission of the school.
  2. In the second phase, high performing teachers are given opportunities to develop their leadership capacities. Principals examine recruitment and retention trends to pinpoint areas for enhancement and revision. Teachers are also put in teams so that they might learn and grow from one another.
  3. In the last stage, teachers are encouraged to engage in action research and seek outside professional development. Teachers are encouraged to not only be leaders in their school but leaders in their field across the district, state, and region.



**2. Have teachers complete a curriculum audit or their own class(es).**

**a. One way to have teachers do this is by using a calendar. For each month, have them write down answers to any of the following:**

- i. What standards did you teach?
- ii. What were some of your Essential Questions?
- iii. What texts/resources did you use?
- iv. What assessments did you give (summative, interim, benchmark, etc)?

**b. You can conduct this review in many different ways; the calendar is merely one avenue toward curriculum review.**

- i. You could have teachers comment on your existing curriculum documents.
- ii. You could have teachers write a narrative describing their relationship with the existing curriculum. What do they like? What do they use? What do they dislike? What do they not use?



**3. Once teachers have outlined what they do in their classrooms, have teachers compare across their grade level.**

**a. Teachers should start by examining their teaching practices. Have teachers think about/answer these questions:**

- i. Is the curriculum the same in all classes?
- ii. Is the assessment based on the same standards?
- iii. Is the instruction aligned to the same standards?
- iv. Is the success criterion the same (meaning, do they have the same expectations regarding what constitutes proficient)?

**b. During this time, teachers should also be taking note of strengths and weaknesses within the curriculum as an entity.**

- i. Are there units that are strongly developed and implemented across the grade?
- ii. Are there units unique to teachers that could be done across the grade?
- iii. Are there units that are not being implemented with fidelity that should be revised or removed?
- iv. Are there units that have no connection to the standards, or to your grade level goals, that should be eliminated?

**c. No changes need to be made at this time; here, you are only in the review phase.**

**d. This grade level review can be done independently where teachers are given a form to complete while reviewing a colleague's map, or they can compare in a round-table discussion while assigning one member to take notes on the review sheet.**



**4. After your grade-level teams have met, have teachers move into mixed teams.**

**a. Make sure teachers have an opportunity to compare curriculums with grade level teams above and below their own.**

**b. As teachers review their curriculum guides, work through the following questions:**

- i. Is there redundant content across grades that should be eliminated?
- ii. Is there content covered in grades that are not chronological? For example, is there a science topic covered in grades 3 and 5, meaning it is skipped in grade 4? How will you combat these gaps?
- iii. Is the content mapped out in line with the progression of skills in the standards?
  1. Is the content outlined adequately preparing students for the next grade level?
- iv. Do grade level curriculums flow from one to the next? If not, how can you improve the congruence of your curriculum map?
- v. Are there cross-curricular connections? Are there standards that can be taught in more than one subject or content area?

See *Mapping the Big Picture* (Hayes-Jacobs, 1997)

See *Getting Results with Curriculum Mapping* (Hayes-Jacobs, 2004)

See “Transformational Leadership Framework” (New Leaders, Inc, 2016)



## **Writing Curriculum: Plan for Curriculum Changes**

### **5. Determine how you want to organize your curriculum.**

#### **a. Housing- Where and how will your curriculum map be stored?**

- i. Online- Interactive Map
  1. Will you utilize an online curriculum mapping platform? Is this for teachers and staff or will it be utilized by students and parents?
- ii. Online- PDF/Word Document
  1. If you are using a published curriculum map, where will it be stored? Who will have access?
- iii. Considerations-
  1. Who has access to your curriculum documents? Will the maps be accessible to the public? If you are using an online platform, how will the public know what is occurring in your schools?
  2. How does access occur? Is it through a secure site or is it readily available on your district webpage?

#### **b. Design- How will you structure your curriculum map?**

- i. As you begin to think about how you will structure and present your maps, think about how these will look for elementary and secondary. Will you have maps for each subject area at all grade levels? Or, will you create integrated maps for elementary? If you create integrated maps or content-based maps, you will have to carefully consider your layout and the instruction you give teachers for reading and interpreting your format correctly.
- ii. **Vertical Template-** With this format, your map would be read from the top of the page to the bottom of the page. If you choose a



vertical template, you must decide where components are placed and the perceived importance that comes with those placements. For example, is the information at the top of the page more important than that at the bottom? Does the flow of information reflect the order in which those items are taught?

- iii. **Horizontal Template-** With this format, your map would be read from left to right. Since this might mean that your columns are narrow, you will have to be selective regarding how many columns you have on your map. What will be in your column on the far left? What will be on the far right? What might this say about your values?
- iv. **Calendar-** This method of curriculum mapping requires a great deal of consideration. You must answer the following before mapping: Will your maps be aligned to the month? Week? Or Day? What will teachers access when they choose the month/week/day? Will teachers be bound to the map like a pacing guide? Does it allow for flexibility? What guides the map? Content? Theme? Time?

**c. Design: How will you organize/structure the materials presented in your curriculum map?**

- i. What will guide your Curriculum Design Map? And/or what will you include in your Curriculum Design Map? Some leading components could be:
  - 1. **Theme-** Themes can be based on the area of study or can transcend content areas (more likely to happen in primary school with integrated units). Themes can be overarching ideas like “unity” or “overcoming hardship”, or themes can also be topical, like “revolution” or “reproduction”.
  - 2. **Essential Question-** Units can also be centered on a few Essential Questions. Essential Questions should be broad, overarching, and should require extended thinking in order to



be addressed. Essential Questions should not be tied to content or a specific text or answer; rather, they should be broad and reoccurring. To learn more about essential questions, see McTighe and Wiggins.

3. **Standard-** For each unit of study, you will want to consider what standards will drive your instruction and assessment. While you might address multiple standards throughout a unit, it might not always be feasible to assess every standard during the course of the unit. As a team, you will need to decide what your focus standards during the unit will be, how you will teach those standards, how you will assess those standards, and how you will continue to facilitate learning of grade level standards across units.
  - a. For some content areas, this might require you to determine the foundational standards that are implied or required in order to be successful moving forward. In doing this, you will in turn plan your remediation and scaffolding for learners not quite ready to interact with the unit's standards.
4. **Content-** Another key element to consider when designing your curriculum map is the placement of the content to be covered during a given unit. While our standards outline what students should know and be able to do by the end of a given course, our content is the medium through which those ideas and skills are taught. Consider the placement of your content within the map. Will teachers focus on the content more than the standards when viewing the map? Does the content presented allow for teacher and student choice? Is the content unique to the grade level or does it overlap with grades above and below? How will you ensure the quality of the content referenced in your curriculum map?



- ii. When discussing the importance of designing coherent instruction, Charlotte Danielson writes:

“A coherent instructional unit has a well-defined structure. Individual activities support the whole, each activity playing an important role. Time allocations are reasonable, with opportunities for students to engage in reflection and closure. Topics from one part of the unit are connected with others; students explore a subject from many different angles and understand the relationship of the parts to the whole. Instructional groups are suitable to both the instructional goals and students. Where appropriate, students themselves take some initiative in choosing their own work” (73).

1. When designing your curriculum map, you must decide how narrow or broad it will be in prescribing what happens in your classrooms. What components of your map are mandatory? Which are optional? Where does teacher autonomy fit within your map? and/or Over what do teachers have autonomy? While maps tend to outline *what* is taught in the classroom, it is up to your committee to what degree the *‘how’* of teaching is presented in your maps.

See *Enhancing Professional Practice: A framework for teaching* (Danielson, 1996)

See *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (Tyler, 1969)

See *Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding* (McTighe and Wiggins, 2013)



## **Begin Writing your Curriculum**

### **6. Create Program Goals**

- a. Before you determine how your courses will flow and select your content, you must first determine the goals for the program as a whole. These goals become the standards by which you can measure your program success. Your program goals can, and should, stem from a myriad of places. These can include:
  - i. Your district vision
    1. Group or Teacher vision statements (see Playbook for Redesigning Schools for the 21st Century- Chapter 2: Developing a Shared Vision)
  - ii. The foundational practices laid out in the state standards for the content ([ELA Standards](#) page 3).
  - iii. District initiatives (ex. Cooperative learning, project based learning, mastery learning, personalized learning, universal design for learning, etc).
- b. Program goals should work to drive the instructional decisions made when building your course/grade-level maps. Content choices, assessments, and scope and sequence choices should work to ensure that each course meets the goals of your program while maintaining academic rigor.
- c. Program goals can be written alongside your overarching essential questions (see Step 8).



## **7. Scope and Sequence your Standards**

- a. Gather the appropriate course and grade level standards.
  - i. If your content area has standards implementation guides, or other references related to effective instruction of the educational standards, make those resources available as well.
  
- b. Determine the order in which standards should be taught and assessed for mastery. If necessary for your content, you might also determine the amount of time that must be spent on the standards for your course and plan accordingly.
  - i. A standard can be introduced before it is explicitly taught for mastery. Additionally, a standard could (and often, should) be woven into the instruction after it has been ‘mastered’/formally assessed.
  - ii. The standards you choose for direct instruction should match the assessments for the unit of study. As you plan, think about which standards need to be mastered first in order for others to be academically accessible later.
  - iii. Be mindful of how many standards you want to explicitly teach and assess in any given unit. Within each unit, you will have priority standards and support standards. In the area of math, priority standards and support standards are clearly defined. In ELA, that distinction is not as prescribed due to the emphasis on a balanced literacy approach.
    1. **“Priority Standards** are a carefully selected subset of the total list of the grade-specific and course-specific standards within each content area that students must know and be able to do by the end of each school year in order to be prepared to enter the next grade level or course” (Ainsworth, 2011).



- 2. **“Supporting standards** are those standards that support, connect to, or enhance the priority standards. They are taught within the context of the priority standards, but do not receive the same degree of instruction and assessment emphasis as do the priority standards” (Ainsworth, 2011).

**c. Evaluate Standards for Depth of Knowledge-** Norman Webb, a research scientist at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, first introduced ‘Depth of Knowledge’ as part of his study regarding the alignment between standards and assessments. Webb examined four areas of standard/assessment alignment, but the area we will focus on is the area of ‘Depth of Knowledge Consistency’. Webb wanted to make sure that the cognitive demand inherent in the assessment matched the demand laid out in our standards. Webb identified four levels of cognitive demand:

<p><b>I-Recall and Reproduction-</b> This is the least cognitively rigorous. This level of thinking asks students to remember information; the focus is on recitation.</p>	<p><b>II-Skills and Concepts-</b> At this level, students are expected to apply the ideas or knowledge they have learned to engage in new levels of learning and/or to deepen their understanding.</p>
<p><b>III-Strategic Thinking-</b> Students must engage in reasoning and critical thinking to solve complex problems, make decisions, or justify their answers. There is usually more than one possible answer that students can derive by thinking about the content, applying their skills, and challenging their understandings.</p>	<p><b>IV-Extended Thinking-</b> At this level, students are taking the content and skills they have learned, and they are now creating new levels of understanding by researching, solving real world problems, or working to transfer their learning across disciplines. At this level, students are creating something new.</p>

When examining our content standards for their level of cognitive rigor, we find that our standards are written at Depth of Knowledge levels two and three. Our standards do not call for simple recall and reproduction; to



teach our standards properly, you must ask students to engage in application and strategic thinking. In the paper “Cognitive rigor: Blending strengths of Bloom’s Taxonomy and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge to enhance classroom-level processes” (Hess, et. al., 2007), it says “Students learn skills and acquire knowledge more readily when they can transfer their learning to new and more complex situations, a process more likely to occur once they have developed a deep understanding of content. Therefore, ensuring that a curriculum aligns to standards alone will not prepare students...Teachers must...provide all students with challenging tasks and demanding goals...”. In order to create a curriculum that standards-aligned, the level of cognitive rigor in the curriculum must match the level called for in our standards. Once you have determined the Depth of Knowledge of the standards, you can then design learning targets and assessments that align to the appropriate level of rigor.

- i. Learn more about how [Depth of Knowledge applies to the four content areas](#).
- d. Determine Tier 2 and Tier 3 [Vocabulary](#)-** While examining the standards, you might also want to determine the necessary vocabulary that will need to be taught alongside the skills embedded in the standards. When discussing vocabulary there are three tiers we can discuss:



**Tier 1-** These words are the ones used in everyday speech. These words are not academic in nature and are seen as basic communication.

**Tier 2-** Tier two words must be explicitly taught and are your academic terms. These terms can easily transfer across disciplines but can also be used more in one discipline than another. For example, the term 'formulate' might be used in math and science more than English Language Arts or social studies. But, 'formulate' is still an academic term that must be explicitly taught. It is important that schools use the same definition for academic terms across disciplines (and grades).

**Tier 3-** These words are content specific and must be explicitly taught by the content area teacher. These words are integral to the instruction of disciplinary content. It is critical that teachers use the same definition and description across grade levels; it is important that these common definitions be academic in nature if they are to withstand the K-12 growth of learners.

e. **Cross Grade Level Checks-** As you go through your standards and add them to your curriculum map, it is important that you scan your curriculum to make sure that all standards are covered at each grade level, and to the level necessary to adequately prepare students for the next grade/course. Vertical and horizontal scans can be used to ensure that clusters, skills, and concepts are covered

- i. **Vertical Scan-** In vertical scans you selected one subject area from two grades below and one grade above what you teach. Scan and cluster vertically through the documents for one interdisciplinary skill and highlight the standards that address the skill. Note similarities and increased complexity in required performances over the years. Repeat the process for other interdisciplinary skills.
- ii. **Horizontal Scan-** In horizontal scans, you do the following:
  1. Select standards documents at the appropriate grade level for the subjects you wish to integrate.



2. Identify one interdisciplinary skill—one that involves a complex performance such as research or communication.
3. Identify the subset of skills that are involved in the performance of the complex interdisciplinary skill. Scan the standards document in one subject area to identify specific standards that are a part of the interdisciplinary skill. Look at the verbs for help in finding the related standards. In the case of research, for example, these might be verbs such as formulate, analyze, investigate, plan, and compile.
4. Choose one color of highlighter. Highlight all standards that relate to the interdisciplinary skill in that subject area. Cluster together standards into meaningful chunks if standards are not organized in this way. Note similarities across subjects.
5. Use different colors of highlighters to repeat the process for other interdisciplinary skills across subject areas.

**f. Quick Links:**

- i. [ELA Standards](#)



## 8. Write Essential Questions

- a. In the book *Essential Questions* (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013), the authors reinforce the tenants laid out in their previous work, *Understanding by Design* (2011), that learning is best when students can transfer it across content, grades, and life. To do this effectively, McTighe and Wiggins assert that our instruction should be focused around well-developed Essential Questions. In their book, they outline the seven traits of an Essential Question. A good Essential Question...
  - i. “Is open-ended; that is, it typically will not have a single, final, and correct answer.
  - ii. Is thought-provoking and intellectually engaging, often sparking discussion and debate.
  - iii. Calls for higher-order thinking, such as analysis, inference, evaluation, prediction. It cannot be effectively answered by recall alone.
  - iv. Points toward important, transferrable ideas within (and sometimes across) disciplines.
  - v. Raises additional questions and sparks further inquiry.
  - vi. Requires support and justification, not just an answer.
  - vii. Recurs over time; that is, the question can and should be revisited again and again” (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013).
  
- b. To write Essential Questions, McTighe and Wiggins recommend thinking of the standards as the answers. If students are expected to learn \_\_, then what question can we ask to help drive the learning?
  
- c. Essential Questions can fall into three categories: Overarching, Topical, and Metacognitive and Reflective. While overarching and topical are grounded in the academic content, metacognitive and reflective relate to learning that is occurring generally.



- i. **Overarching Questions:** These questions are meant to transfer across grades and disciplines. “They...recur over the years to promote conceptual connections and curriculum coherence within (and sometimes) across topics and disciplines” (McTighe and Wiggins, 2013).
    - 1. “Overarching essential questions are valuable for framing entire courses and programs of study” (McTighe and Wiggins, 2013). These can be done in tandem with the creation of your program goals.
  - ii. **Topical Questions:** These questions are meant to help students think critically about all content presented in a unit of study. These questions about board but are still grounded in what the student is going to learn in that particular area.
  - iii. **Metacognitive and Reflective:** These questions get at the essential learning and performance skills that students will need to master in order to achieve in and outside of school. With the state’s emphasis on student success skills, including this genre of essential questions in all of your maps will not only build continuity across disciplines, but they will lay a foundation for the implementation of student success in every content area.
- d. Questions can also be Non-Essential. McTighe and Wiggins outline three types of non-essential questions.
- i. **Questions That Lead:** These questions tend to achieve only Depth of Knowledge Level 1: Recall and Reproduction. Their goal is “not to signal inquiry but to point to a fact” (McTighe and Wiggins, 2013).
  - ii. **Questions That Guide:** These questions will again lead to a definite answer and do little to generate student inquiry. Students might have to apply targeted knowledge toward the development of an answer, but the depth of thinking required is limited in rigor and is not meant to continue throughout the course.



- iii. **Questions That Hook:** These questions are intended to pique students' interest and foster imagination before entering a new unit of study.
  
- e. While essential and non-essential questions are important in any course, make sure that the questions you select for your map are essential in nature. Non-Essential Questions will have a place in unit and lesson design, but your maps should focus first on promoting team-developed, academic and non-academic essential questions.



## 9. Develop Aligned Assessments

**a. Learning Objectives-** Learning Objectives, or Learning Targets, are what connect your standards, essential questions, and assessment to the lessons that are put before our students. Learning Targets will always be derived from our standards, but they should then be expressed to students in a way that is student friendly. Moss and Brookhart (2012) argue that student friendly learning targets should not just be written with simple language and short sentences, but they should “...enable students to see themselves as the agents of learning”. Moss and Brookhart suggest using first person language (‘I/We can’), using demonstrations or illustrations of the learning target, and helping students generate questions to keep track of their progress toward the learning goal. To write a learning target, there are three steps you must take:

- i. You must first define the essential content knowledge that students must learn (pulled from the standard).
- ii. You must define the level of reasoning that will be required (this comes from your DOK analysis).
- iii. You must define the performance expectation (this is your assessment).

**b. System of Assessment-** In Susan Brookhart’s book, *How to Make Decisions with Different Kinds of Assessment Data*, she talks about the importance of using more than one data point to address the needs of students. To vary your data points, you must first examine the types of assessment you use. Brookhart divides assessments into four quadrants: Formative and Large Scale (Interim), Summative and Large Scale (Accountability), Formative and Classroom Focused, and Summative and Classroom Focused (Grading). As educators, our goal is to ensure student learning; however, we must make sure that we can measure students’ progress toward that success and address their needs appropriately. A strong and varied assessment pool allows us to do just that.



- c. Types of Assessment-** When reviewing your assessments for their use within your system, Brookhart suggests that we examine the purpose and focus of the assessment in order to select the right assessment type and then to utilize its data appropriately. To evaluate an assessment's purpose, you must ask if it is meant to inform learning or if it is meant to certify that learning has occurred. You must then choose the assessment type that is within your area of focus. Are you using the assessment to influence what happens in the classroom? Or are you hoping for the assessment to have 'large-scale' context (school/district/state-level implications)?
- i. **Summative-** Summative assessments are meant to evaluate student learning (i.e. skill acquisition and mastery of content knowledge). Summative assessments can be used at the classroom level to generate a student's grade, and summatives can also be used by districts and government agencies for accountability. A summative assessment does not have to be a 'test' in the traditional sense. It can be; however, a summative assessment can also be an essay, a project, or a portfolio (these are just a few examples). Summatives, like all assessments, should be aligned to the standards for the unit of study not only in context but also in rigor. Meaning, if the rigor of your assessment does not align with the rigor called for in the standards, then you need to reevaluate your instruction and assessment.
    1. You can learn more about how our state standards align to the Kansas Assessment Program by visiting their site, [www.ksassessments.org](http://www.ksassessments.org)
  - ii. **Formative-** In 2007, the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) created the following definition for Formative Assessment: "Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback



to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes." Formative assessment can be informal (ex. Fist to Five, Exit Slip, etc.) or formal (ex. Quiz, Summary of Learning, etc.). SCASS also came up with five attributes of effective formative assessments:

1. Learning Progressions- You should have a clear learning goal (these are derived from our standards).
2. Learning Goals and Criteria for Success- Students should know what is expected of them (these come from your learning objectives and rubrics).
3. Descriptive Feedback- Students need clear feedback that is actionable and forces them to investigate their work and rectify their missteps.
4. Self- and Peer Assessment- We must have students think about their learning and spend time articulating learning expectations to others. [John Hattie lists 'self-reported grades/student expectations' as having a 1.44 effect size.]
5. Collaboration- Formative assessment should allow for students and teachers to become partners in the learning process.

We also know from John Hattie's work that 'providing formative evaluation' has a .90 effect size while 'feedback' has an effect size of .75. Thus, a strong formative system is essential to the success of students.

To learn more about reviewing your formative assessment system, see *Using the Formative Assessment Rubrics, Reflection and Observation Tools to Support Professional Reflection and Practice* (Wylie & Lyon, 2016).

- iii. **Interim-** Interim assessments are administered regularly and are meant to provide multiple levels of information. Interims can be administered as checkpoints throughout a unit of study to guide



teacher instruction (sometimes in the form of a Common Formative Assessment), but they can also be administered at a higher level (like the state interims) to help guide programming and create a check on summative accountability measures. Interims often change with the standards being taught in a given unit.

- iv. **Benchmark-** Benchmark assessments are meant to track progress over time and not administered as regularly as an interim. They tend to remain the same in form and structure with similar content presented each time. Benchmarks should be used to track growth and present gaps in student (or class-level) understanding that will need to be addressed through programming discussions. While interim and benchmark assessments tend to overlap, the key difference is purpose and intent. Benchmarks are used for tracking growth over time. Interims can provide varying types and level of feedback depending on their design.
- v. **Diagnostic-** Diagnostic assessments are meant to determine the particular academic needs of a student who is failing to show academic growth (as measured on benchmarks or other screeners). These can be used in advance of a unit to help guide teacher instruction, or they can be used to assist teachers in planning and administering intervention.



## **10. Incorporate Resources & Embed Practice**

**a. Content Selection-** A curricular resource is meant to be a vehicle for how content is presented in your course. It should not be the only vehicle.

Rather, resources support the work being done by presenting your standards and learning objectives in a tangible form. Your standards, essential questions, objectives, and assessment goals should guide your instructional path with the curricular resource being your support.

Resource adoption should take time and an investment from district and building level staff. To learn more about adopting a curricular resource, please utilize our KSDE Curriculum Adoption Guide.

i. Curriculum Adoption

1. [English Language Arts](#)

ii. Resource Review: Outside Support

1. [www.Edreports.org](http://www.Edreports.org)

2. [Achieve the Core Textbook Review Guides](#)

3. [Equip Rubrics for Lesson and Unit Evaluation](#)

### **b. Embed Evidence-Based Practice**

i. Under the Every Students Succeed Act (ESSA), states and local education agencies are responsible for ensuring that evidence-based practices are being utilized in schools. As you design your map, think about how you will ensure that the curriculum is being taught with practices that are evidence-based and thus shown to improve student outcomes when implemented with fidelity. While you might not want to be too prescriptive in your maps, you might consider offering suggestions for instructional practice that can accompany each unit of study. For example, if you build a project into your map, you might recommend evidence-based strategies to accompany the instruction of the project. Learn more about reviewing your teaching practices by utilizing the WestEd resource.

1. [WestEd Evidence-Based Practices Review](#)



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Learn more about evidence-based practices by visiting any of the following:

1. [What Works Clearinghouse](#)
2. [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#)
3. [KSDE: Evidence-Based Practices Resource Page](#)

See *Align the Design* (Mooney & Mausbach, 2008)

See *Playbook for Redesigning Schools for the 21st Century* (Cross and Martinez, 2016)

See *How to Make Decisions with Different Kinds of Student Assessment Data* (Brookhart, 2015)

See *Teaching Literacy in the Visible Learning Classroom* (Fisher, Frey, Hattie, and Thayer, 2017)

See *Learning Targets* (Moss & Brookhart, 2012)

See *Using the Formative Assessment Rubrics, Reflection and Observation Tools to Support Professional Reflection and Practice* (Wylie & Lyon, 2016)

See “Rigorous Curriculum Design: A Four-Part Overview” (Ainsworth, 2011)

See “Cognitive Rigor: Blending Strengths of Bloom’s Taxonomy and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge to Enhance Classroom-level Processes” (Hess, Jones, Carlock, and Walkup, 2009)

See- Hale, S., Dunn, L., Filby, N, Rice, J., & Van Houten, L. (2017). Evidence-based improvement: A guide for states to strengthen their frameworks and supports aligned to the evidence requirements of ESSA. San Francisco: WestEd



## **Plan for Success**

### **11. Plan for Support and Choice**

- a. Bring in Support-** As we work to build a system of instruction that is built upon our content-area standards, we need to make sure that our curriculum is designed to help facilitate growth within and along the standards. Meaning, we want to make sure that students are exposed to the content enough that have an opportunity to demonstrate mastery. We also want to make sure that our curriculum lends itself to differentiation to meet the needs of each student. As you plan, consider the following:
- i. How will you support students who are academically behind in accessing the current curriculum?
  - ii. If students receive intervention, how will that intervention align with and support the classroom curriculum?
  - iii. What areas of the curriculum are flexible enough to be adapted for student need? (Ex. Students can pick an article to read based on their lexile.) What areas of the curriculum must be maintained but supported through instruction? (Ex. Students read the same text, but how they read it and what they do with it changes.)
- b. Bring in Extension and Enrichment-** While we want to plan supports for students who need more academic assistance, we also want to make sure that our curriculum offers opportunity to explore and grow the depth of their knowledge and skills along the way. Consider:
- i. How can you use projects to allow students to grow at their own level and pace within your current areas of study?
  - ii. In what ways can you challenge students' thinking over the content being study? Where can you embed exploration, self-directed learning, or challenge for those who are already demonstrating mastery of the standards and content?



**c. Incorporating Choice-** To incorporate student and teacher choice, the curriculum team must decide which pieces of the curriculum are tightly held and which are loosely held.

- i. **Tightly Held-** The ‘tightly held’ curriculum is that which all students must learn and be able to perform. This curriculum tends to be rather inflexible. Your tightly held curriculum should stem from your standards; standards outline what students should know and be able to do by the end of a course and this should be your expectation for every student.
- ii. **Loosely Held-** The ‘loosely held’ curriculum is where teachers and students can exercise choice over how material is taught and how learning is demonstrated. While a district might promote specific instructional practices, teachers should have some autonomy to choose content presentation and certain class materials. Again, districts can have guidelines surrounding materials, but allowing teachers and students to choose how they learn content standards means that the needs of students are more likely to be met.
  1. To learn more about choice for students, see *Learning to Choose, Choosing to Learn* (Anderson, 2016).



## 12. Auditing and Updating

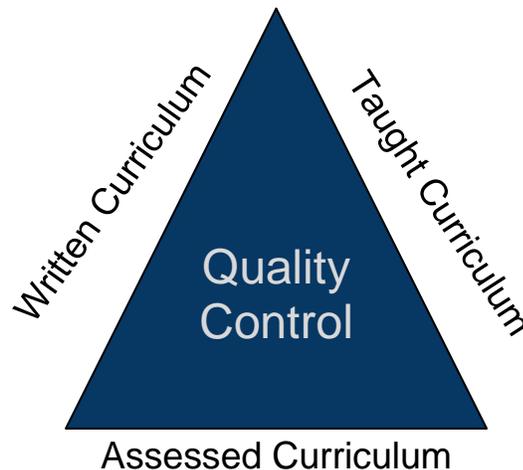
a. **Curriculum Auditing-** In the book *Ensuring High Quality Curriculum* by Angela Di Michele Lalor, she states "...considering a curriculum "done" is really an indicator that it is time to revisit the curriculum again". Generating a plan for review and revision is important to developing and maintaining a strong curriculum. In *Developing a Quality Curriculum* (Glatthorn, 1994), the author provides seven steps for planning and implementing a curriculum audit. Those steps are:

- i. Develop the design.
- ii. Develop or acquire data-collection instruments.
- iii. Determine who will implement the design.
- iv. Develop a formal audit proposal.
- v. Orient the community and staff.
- vi. Conduct the audit.
- vii. Prepare the audit report.

You must also determine what it is that you are going to evaluate. When you began this guide, steps two, three, and four, asked you to review your current taught curriculum, your alignment to your written curriculum, and the authenticity with which those elements aligned. During a curriculum audit, you are doing much of the same; however, you are now going to look at how the written curriculum transformed itself into the instructional practices of teachers and the assessment practices and results. This audit will speak to the fidelity of implementation and it will also inform the types and levels of change that will be needed once the audit report has been reviewed.



- b. Curriculum Review Triangle-** In order to ensure the quality of your curriculum, you must evaluate the three pieces that contribute to your curriculum: what is written, what is taught, and what is ultimately assessed.



While curriculum writing asks us to first evaluate what is happening in the classroom regarding curriculum, curriculum auditing is meant to evaluate the system's support for, implementation of, and success of the written, taught, and assessed curriculum.

As a curriculum auditing team, you are not only examining the instruction, but the system built to support instruction. Thus, when engaging in curriculum auditing, you should consider the following:

- i. To what degree does your district level leadership support and promote the written curriculum?
- ii. Is appropriate and adequate training provided over the curriculum?
- iii. Are appropriate and adequate resources provided for implementing the curriculum?
- iv. Is the curriculum accessible to all student groups?
- v. Is the curriculum implemented with fidelity across buildings?
- vi. Are common assessments being given with fidelity? Is the assessment data being used to guide instruction?



- a. How can you use the data to guide your future curriculum work?
- vii. Is the curriculum viewed by teachers as having value? If so, how can it be enhanced? If not, how can the curriculum regain value?

By working through these questions, audit team members will be able to construct a report outlining the curriculum needs of the district at all levels (leadership, building, and classroom). From here, purposeful curriculum work can begin.

This guide is meant to support educational leaders through the process of quality curriculum design. While steps can be reordered, each step in the process is essential to the design of strong curriculum. Use this guide to start your work, but also, use the listed resources supporting this document to further your knowledge of the many aspects of curriculum development.

Also, your state education consultants are available to assist you with content-specific needs. Never hesitate to reach out to your state office. Additionally, review the state webpage for your content area to find resources geared toward facilitating standards-driven instruction in your field. You can also use [this KSDE created resource](#) to help you with your audit.

See *Learning to Choose, Choosing to Learn* (Anderson, 2016)

See *Ensuring High-Quality Curriculum* (Lalor, 2016)

See *Developing a Quality Curriculum* (Glatthorn, 1994)



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