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# CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

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Curriculum development is a unique and distinctive process driven by a school district's needs, interests, attention, and resources. Some districts, starting at ground zero, need more direction. Other districts have well-developed curricula and need only to monitor, evaluate, and update their implementation. While nearly every district should find something useful, not every district will need all of this document. This document is not a prescription; it simply offers guidance.

The written curriculum will not contain everything a teacher will say or do in a classroom. The curriculum should include those items all teachers are expected to implement, administrators will monitor, and district curriculum writers will evaluate. A district may opt to include additional information in its curriculum; however, these items should be clearly identified as optional or suggested. A district curriculum delineates required elements of instruction purposefully tracked throughout the school year. All the other elements of instruction are left to the professionalism of the individual teacher.

This document was developed to assist districts as they create a written curriculum. Curriculum writers should cautiously build a viable document based on the needs, challenges, and abilities of their students, staff, and community. A district curriculum is a living document that one must continually implement, monitor, evaluate, and update. It is incumbent upon districts to create a manageable curriculum which is both reflective of their community's needs and aligned to state learning expectations.

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# WHAT IS CURRICULUM?

Curriculum is a design plan for learning that requires purposeful and proactive organization, sequencing, and management of the interactions among the teacher, the students, and the standards we want students to acquire (Mishra, 2011).

It is the curriculum that provides both the plans for learning and the actual delivery of those plans. To ensure the written curriculum matches what teachers teach and students learn, we must consider three categories of curriculum (Marzano, 2003) including:

- ✔ **Intended or Written Curriculum** is the curriculum produced by a school district and includes state standards, district scope and sequence charts, teacher planning documents and curricular units of instruction. This curriculum may be called an “official curriculum” because it is an effort to guide the instructional program of the school district to help assure that district policy is implemented in the classroom.
- ✔ **Implemented or Taught Curriculum** is the curriculum teachers establish through lesson plans. Ideally, the implemented curriculum and written curriculum have a high correlation. While daily lesson plans are generally not part of the school's written curriculum, alignment of lessons to the standards ensures the implemented curriculum and intended or written curriculum align. The curriculum should have a strong influence over the resources selected and developed for both the instructional programs and assessments.
- ✔ **Attained or Learned Curriculum** is what might be considered the “bottom-line” because it is the curriculum students actually learn at school as measured by formative and summative assessments. Student proficiency on learning assessments aligned to the standards indicates successful implementation of both written and taught curricula.

## Why create a curriculum?

While creating a guaranteed, rigorous, and viable curriculum is best practice and pedagogically sound, external motivators must be taken under consideration:

- State-level requirements
- Graduation requirements as dictated by success-ready (college, career, and life) standards
- Teacher evaluation practices
- Consistency and coherence both vertically and horizontally
- Equity and access for all groups
- Common assessments (summative, formative, CFA, benchmark, and/or diagnostic)

## Why should curriculum align to the Learning Standards?

There are sound educational reasons why districts should align their written curricula to the state's learning standards. Alignment provides consistency across buildings, districts, and the state. The standards build upon one another, creating rigor and cohesion across grade levels as well as scaffolding students' learning to ensure they are success-ready. Additionally, most state large-scale assessments are written to the current learning standards.

### RESOURCES/SAMPLES

Larry Ainsworth. 2011. *Rigorous Curriculum Design: How to Create Curricular Units of Study that Align Standards, Instruction, and Assessment*. Englewood, CO: Leadership and Learning Center.

Center for Applied Special Technology. 2014. "About UDL." <http://www.cast.org/udl/>

Developing Curriculum: Considerations And Applications | Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2024). Mo.gov. <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/curr-framework-developing-curriculum>

Allan Glatthorn. 1994. *Developing a Quality Curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Heidi Hayes-Jacobs. 2009. *The Curriculum Mapping Planner Templates, Tools, and Resources for Effective Professional Development*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Robert J. Marzano, Phil Warrick and Julia A. Simms. 2014. *A Handbook for High Reliability Schools: The Next Step in School Reform*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.

Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins. 2013. *Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Nancy Mooney and Ann Mausbach. 2008. *Align the Design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

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# CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Designing a curriculum requires the intentional alignment between standards, instruction, and assessment. According to Larry Ainsworth (2017), building a strong curricular foundation requires five sequential and foundational steps:

- Unwrap the Standards
- Sequence and organize the Standards into manageable Units of Study
- Prepare a pacing Calendar
- Construct the Units of Study
- Write the Unit assessments and daily lesson plans

**Instruction** refers to the action or practice of teaching and includes the activities that hone a student's knowledge or skills. More concisely, instruction is “how” a particular subject or skill is taught. To be most effective, instruction must be responsive to students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, and preferences in learning and interests. Teachers should make every effort to use highly effective and personalized instructional strategies in all classrooms.

**Assessment** is the formal and informal evaluation of students' progress toward meeting their educational goals. Teachers use summative, formative, benchmark, and diagnostic assessments as a regular part of the instructional process. Summative assessments, or assessment of learning, are administered at the end of a learning cycle and are intended to summarize the development of learners at a particular time. Formative assessments, or assessment for learning, are used by teachers during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student achievement. Benchmark and diagnostic assessments help teachers and other school personnel identify student's specific learning needs.

## Guidelines & Procedures for Curriculum Revision

Curriculum review and revision are continuous and ongoing processes. Curriculum review should occur on an annual basis with curriculum revision occurring on a six-year cycle. The content and format of the written curriculum will meet the guidelines specified by each district.

### CURRICULUM REVISION

The purpose of revising curriculum is to maximize the quality and effectiveness of the written curriculum across and between grade-levels, ensure curriculum, assessment, and instruction are closely tied, examine the alignment of the curriculum to the state standards, and include the most recent research-based strategies.

Curriculum-writing committees or teams are organized by content area and are designated on a six-year cycle. This includes a review of the current curriculum following local and state and/or national guidelines.

Each district should create a warehouse or system by which to collect curriculum, making it accessible to all relevant stakeholders.

The principal should monitor the implementation of the curriculum with support from the district office personnel as appropriate and needed.

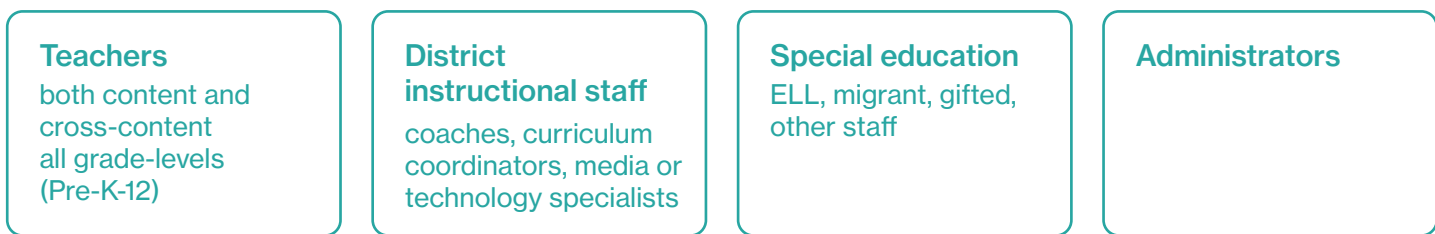
Curricular material selection is conducted concurrently or after the curriculum is written.

## Curriculum Revision Process Planning

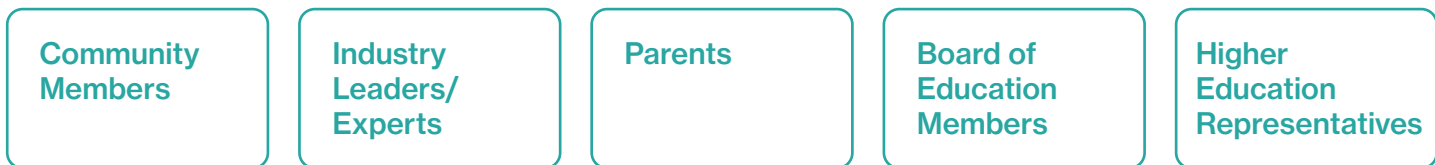
A prerequisite to designing curriculum in any content area, course, or grade level is a thoughtfully established vision. The vision establishes the end goal and objectives for the final product. Once the vision is in place, a solid plan for determining participants, the timeline, the shape, and the scope of the written curricula can be determined.

### WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS?

To begin, involve those who are responsible for implementing the curriculum. This will likely be educators who possess a personal knowledge of the district's students and the focus content, have a feel for scope and sequence and have likely developed curricula in the past.



As the curriculum evolves, others may be needed to both consult and review the content of the curriculum. Although these individuals may not have the educational attributes of the above group, their ongoing input and final review can generate a smooth transition and improve the likelihood of a successful implementation.



### DOCUMENTATION TO CONSIDER

Once the vision has been written, committees established and timeframe determined, the district should begin with a thorough review of documents and professional learning.

- ✔ **Learning Standards** – some state's mandate that a district's curriculum aligns with the state standards, others do not. While there may be other viable and legitimate choices, districts must consider future state assessments in weighing other options.
- ✔ **Graduation Plan or Handbook** – if one is provided as part of the state's required documents
- ✔ **Professional Learning Materials and Needs** – Teachers, administrators and other district staff may need professional learning in order to produce and implement the newly minted curriculum. Consider the staff's prior experiences and knowledge.

☑ **District Assessment Plan** – Although assessment plans are often stand-alone documents, understanding how curriculum and assessment tie together is vital if assessment is to be meaningful as a guide to instruction and a lynchpin of students’ academic progress. Take into consideration these facets of assessment:

- ✓ common benchmark assessments
- ✓ classroom diagnostic assessments
- ✓ screening instruments
- ✓ state-level testing

## A FEW RESOURCES MAY BE HELPFUL TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS:

Developing Curriculum: Considerations And Applications | Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2024). Mo.gov. <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/curr-framework-developing-curriculum>

Educational Broadcasting Corporation. 2004. “Workshop: Assessment, Evaluation, Curriculum Redesign.” <http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/assessment/index.html>

Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins. 2007. *Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins. 2005. *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins. 2011. “Understanding by Design Framework.” ASCD. [http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/UbD\\_WhitePaper0312.pdf](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/UbD_WhitePaper0312.pdf)

Nancy Mooney and Ann Mausbach. 2008. *Align the Design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

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# PROCESS

## Year One

- ☑ **Standards Examination** – begin by identifying the big ideas of each standard related to learning, followed by developing unit goals to be covered over the course of the year and determining the content's concepts and skills to be developed. These will become especially important in the Unit of Study stage of writing curriculum.
- ☑ **K-12 Scope and Sequence or Vertical Alignment** – During this part of the process, the team develops the scope (breadth and depth of content covered) and the sequence (order in which content is presented) of a content area. To best precipitate this process, include in team discussions a K-12 list of courses that include course descriptions and a list of objectives that specify when objectives are introduced, focused, targeted for instruction, reinforced and assessed.
- ☑ Define and discuss what success/readiness looks like in the content area
- ☑ Unpack the standards (teams meet as smaller content groups)
  - ✓ Determine what students need to know
- ☑ Plan the large sweeping Units of Study for the year
  - ✓ Write essential questions for each unit
  - ✓ Write big ideas and enduring understandings
  - ✓ Write summative assessments for each unit include performance tasks
  - ✓ Identify success criteria
  - ✓ Plan summative assessments
  - ✓ Write rubrics for the assessments
  - ✓ Determine other evidence (observation-CFA-benchmark-other formatives)
  - ✓ Identify the activities/tasks/resources for the unit
  - ✓ Identify only those that expected for all teachers to teach
  - ✓ Teams reconvene as large groups to examine overlaps and expectations
  - ✓ Identify the Professional Learning teachers need for success

## Year Two

- ☑ Once the curriculum is written and the units have been planned, the hard work actually begins: the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and eventual updating of this new curriculum. This process begins with implementation and continues with ongoing monitoring, evaluation and updating. The oft-used phrase “curriculum is truly never finished,” while cliché, is true. The curriculum as it is intended goes into practice; and through use, further research, and even some trial and error, the curriculum document gets tweaked and revamped and made more complete. Eventually, the whole process repeats.
- ☑ The initial implementation of the curriculum can be viewed as a bit of a field test; it can be phased in or implemented all at once, depending upon the needs of the teachers, district, and the preparedness of other stakeholders. One way in which a district might begin implementation is to consider this process, adapting as necessary to meet the district's and community's needs.

- ☑ Meet monthly to revise/review units
- ☑ Use data teams to create a sequence of units based on instructional priorities, the resources at hand and a hierarchy of skills in the units.
  - ✓ Examine student work
  - ✓ Examine scoring guides
  - ✓ Data collection might include:
    - Multiple sources of data (Wiggins and McTighe, *Schooling by Design*, does a great job of explaining useful sources of data.)
    - State achievement tests
    - National achievement tests
    - School accreditation documents
    - Surveys of constituents
    - Local achievement tests
    - Grade distributions
    - Graduation/dropout rates
    - Surveys of students, teachers, administrators
    - Structured observations
- ☑ In, *Align the Design*, 2008, Mooney and Mausbach say these “look fors” include:
  - ✓ gains and losses across grade-levels and within grade-levels using multiple measures
  - ✓ achievement levels based on both in-house and other commercial assessments the district might use
- ☑ **Implement Professional Learning** – the administration and professional learning committee should consider the staff’s professional learning needs. Depending upon the staff level of involvement in the development of the curriculum and upon the background knowledge the staff possesses, the administration may consider delaying implementation until the staff is prepared to begin implementation. A veteran staff may only need a quick refresher of professional learning before putting the new curriculum into place.

## Year Three

- ☑ Meet once per quarter to review and revise units
  - ✓ At the quarterly meeting, the following questions may be posed for discussion. Valuable information is derived from district teacher input to improve written curriculum, facilitate communication among staff, and promote effective curriculum implementation.
    - Did the curriculum facilitate the achievement of the intended student proficiency level?
    - Which part of the curriculum worked well?
    - Which part of the curriculum did not work well?
    - Is there a strategy or lesson that one teacher implemented that increased student performance that could be implemented by all staff?
    - Is the written curriculum easy to follow by other instructors, or should more detailed instructions be added for clarification?
    - Are the DOK’s appropriate for each grade level or course? How might the DOK’s of the lessons and/or assessments be increased?
    - Are there any new resources or technology that could be incorporated into the current curriculum?
    - Is the curriculum vertically aligned to other grade levels and courses?



- Were a variety of strategies used in implementation and instruction?
- Did student data reveal a high rate of success in pre-assessments and/or post-assessments that would show the need for increased rigor in curriculum content?

☑ Continue professional learning

## Years Four and Five

### ☑ Implement and evaluate

- ✓ Implementation is in progress. During the monitoring and evaluation phase, the district gathers information that informs district educators of the success of the curriculum and finally, during evaluation, addresses changes based on information (both quantitative and qualitative) that measures the effect of the curriculum.
- ✓ Monitor essential questions. Do the instructional strategies and related activities support the essential questions?
- ✓ Monitor the anchor tasks (those lessons taught identically across all classes in a grade or course) created during unit planning. Some evidence (data) of student learning may come from these anchor tasks.
- ✓ Focus on the content priorities assessed by those identified anchor tasks. The anchor tasks should be intentional and reflect already identified content priorities based on the curricular big ideas or essential questions.
- ✓ Monitor to ensure students and teachers have the necessary tools to support curriculum implementation. Additional needs for student or teacher resources may have been realized during implementation of the curriculum.
- ✓ Monitor the vertical alignment of each content area's curriculum. Does something need to be moved? Does the content need to be developed in a different order (are some foundational skills needed before more abstract expectations, etc.)? Based on data, did the components of curriculum lead to student achievement using multiple measures (not just the state assessment)?
- ✓ If any component did not lead to student achievement, can changes be made to revise it, or should it be replaced by something else?

### ☑ Continue to collect data

- ✓ The data evaluation will drill deeper, including uncovering multiyear trends from disaggregated data and more specific item analysis of local and standardized assessments.

### ☑ Continue professional learning

- ✓ Evaluate the appropriateness of professional learning in order to support and increase teacher content knowledge. This need may emerge based on student achievement data.

## Year Six

☑ See year one

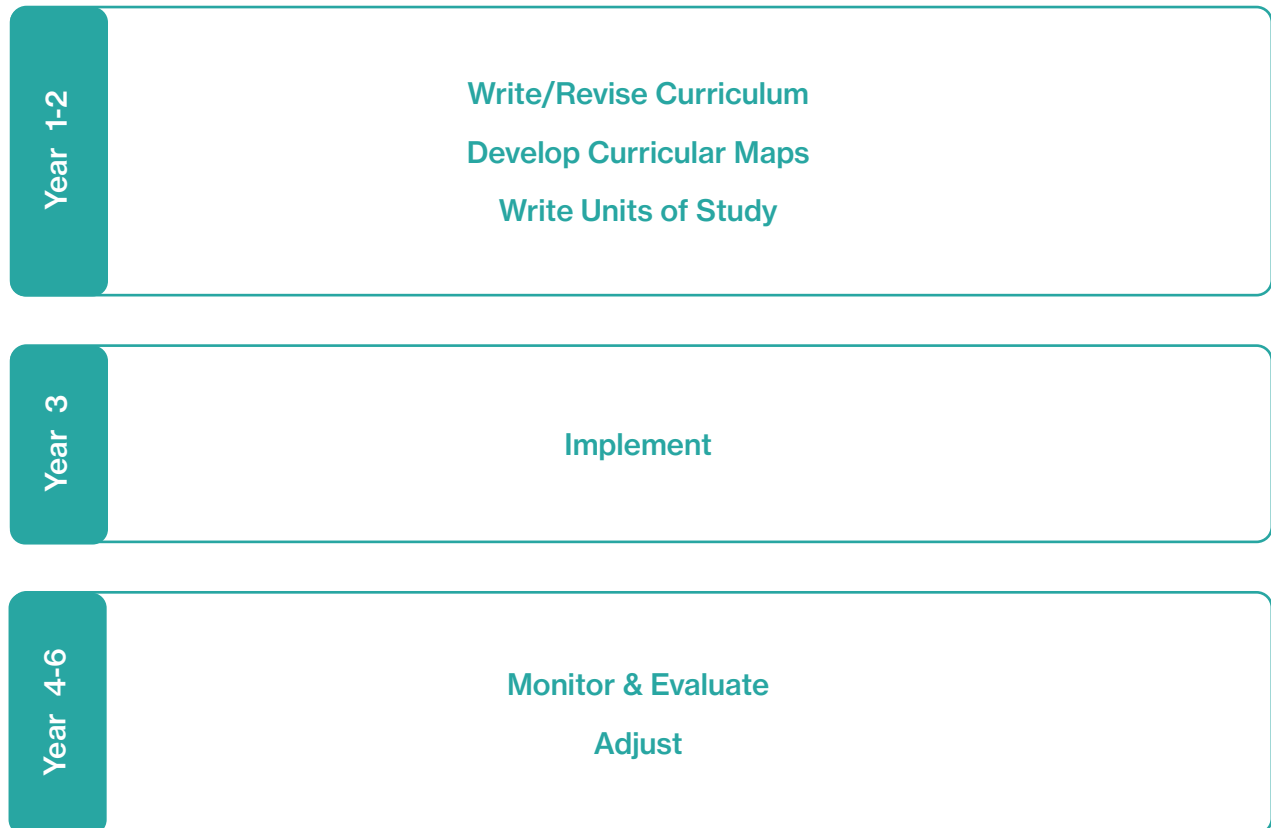
## RESOURCES

Developing Curriculum: Considerations And Applications | Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2024). Mo.gov. <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/curr-framework-developing-curriculum>

Heidi Hayes Jacobs. 2010. *Curriculum 21: Essential Education for a Changing World*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.  
Nancy Mooney and Ann Mausbach. 2008. *Align the Design: A Blueprint for School Improvement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. 2007. *Schooling by Design: Mission, Action, and Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

## Six-Year Program Evaluation and Curriculum Review Process



# Sample Curriculum Development Schedule

Content Team	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
ELA	Evaluate	Monitored Implementation	Less Frequent Monitored Implementation	Implementation	Implementation	Evaluate	Monitored Implementation
Speech/Journalism/Theater							
Math	Evaluate	Monitored Implementation	Less Frequent Monitored Implementation	Implementation	Implementation	Evaluate	Monitored Implementation
Social Studies		Evaluate	Monitored Implementation	Less Frequent Monitored Implementation	Implementation	Implementation	Evaluate
Science		Evaluate	Monitored Implementation	Less Frequent Monitored Implementation	Implementation	Implementation	Evaluate
PE		Evaluate	Monitored Implementation	Less Frequent Monitored Implementation	Implementation	Implementation	Evaluate
World languages			Evaluate	Monitored Implementation	Less Frequent Monitored Implementation	Implementation	Implementation
Art			Evaluate	Monitored Implementation	Less Frequent Monitored Implementation	Implementation	Implementation
Band							
Vocal Music							
Theater							