



**Indicator:** All teachers are guided by a document that aligns standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (4407)

**Explanation:** Districts often provide curriculum guides that align the curriculum to standards and assessments, and sometimes to instruction (as in a pacing guide). Typically this and similar documents are used by teacher Instructional Teams to develop detailed and differentiated unit plans and lesson plans. When such a document is not provided by the district, the Instructional Teams develop the alignment as part of their construction of unit plans.

**Questions:** Do all of your teachers plan their instruction with the guidance of a document that aligns standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

An article in District Administration compared curriculum alignment with aligning the wheels of a car. The point of alignment is to keep the car pointed in a straight direction; the point of aligning curriculum, instruction, standards and assessment is to keep the district and school pointed in the same direction (2004). Webb (1997) echoes this idea and defines alignment as “the degree to which expectations and assessments are in agreement and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system towards students learning what they are expected to know and do” (p. 4).

Niebling (2012) probably states the obvious when he writes, “students perform better on assessment activities when they have had a chance to learn the things on which they are being assessed” (p. 2). In high performing schools that have effective systems set in place, “teachers, working in teams, build the taught curriculum from learning standards, curriculum guides, and a variety of resources, including textbooks, other commercial materials, and teacher-created activities and materials. Instructional Teams organize the curriculum into unit plans that guide instruction for all students and for each student. The unit plans assure that students master standards-based objectives and also provide opportunities for enhanced learning” (Redding, 2007, p. 103).

Drake and Burns (n.d.) define alignment as “a fundamental principal of the backward design process and is central to a successful curriculum. However, what does alignment means? Alignment means that the curriculum is coherent: a common framework aligns curriculum instruction, and assessment” (para. 1). It makes sense then that a district would provide that common framework for all its schools which gives the same expectations and requirements for aligning their curriculum, instructions, and assessments to the state or common core standards. This document also gives some assurance that a child in 3rd grade in school A in the district is getting the same content based on the same standards as a child in 3rd grade in school B in the district. This type of alignment makes it a smoother transition for students as they move between schools within a district as well as ensures that feeder schools are delivering students who have been taught by teachers who were guided by the same expectations across the district.

However, even school that is not provided with a document by the district should take the time to develop a document which guides all the teachers and teams in the building in developing their lesson plans. This document would give guidance on the alignment of the standards, the curriculum to be used, and the assessments. The document

also ensures the leadership in the building that there is coherence in what is being taught across the same grades as well as vertically between grades.

### References and Resources

- District Administration. (2004, July). *The benefits of curriculum alignment*. Retrieved from <http://www.districtadministration.com/article/benefits-curriculum-alignment>
- Drake, S. M., & Burns, R. C. (n.d.). *Using standards to integrate the curriculum*. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/103011/chapters/Using-Standards-to-Integrate-the-Curriculum.aspx>.
- Redding, S. (2007). Systems for improved teaching and learning. In H. Walberg (Ed.). *Restructuring and substantial school improvement* (pp 91–104). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Webb, N. L. (1997, January). Determining alignment of expectations and assessments in mathematics and science education. *NISE Brief, 1*(2). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, National Institute for Science Education.

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