Mi·Map

MICHIGAN Department of Education

ALIGNING CURRICULUM

Planning Your Moves toward a Standards-based Curriculum

Why go this route?

- Because Michigan Curriculum Framework standards (and their practical application in Grade-Level Content Expectations) are what Michigan has decided our children need to know.
- Because people who are asked to change practice need to know the "big picture" of why Michigan is moving toward using statewide grade-level expectations.
- Because our work is more meaningful if we have tight connections between learning goals and expectations (curriculum), teaching methods (instruction) and measurements we use to tell when children have succeeded (assessment).
- Because when curriculum and assessment are not aligned, what is actually tested is socio-economic status.

You'll know you've arrived when...

- Staff members can define standards and benchmarks in their own words.
- Staff can explain the advantages of moving toward a standards-driven curriculum.
- Staff knows where the school is on its standards journey and has made a plan for the next steps.
- Parents have gotten answers to their questions about standards and can explain in their own words why they matter.
- Students can explain what they are studying at any given time and what standards they are expected to reach.

Construction Zone

It's about TIME

- Aligning curriculum may be a year-long process if you are doing it yourself without a district-provided pacing guide. Be patient with yourselves; it needs to be done.
- Getting a shared big picture and making a plan for a reasonable "next step" can be completed in 2-3 hours work at staff meetings or retreats.

Potential COSTS

- Parents' Night might require $100 of materials.
- Released time or substitute coverage might be required to allow staff to work on the process outlined here.

The Process

A step-by-step guide to planning how to move steadily toward standards-based teaching and learning practices.

NOTE: Steps marked with a ● are accompanied by one or more inserts, included in this packet.

1 As a group, read and discuss information about standards.

We have included in this packet a number of reprinted articles about standards-based teaching and learning that explore the question of "*Why* Standards-based Education?" from different angles. We suggest a "jigsaw" approach in which 4 groups of staff members each read a different article and work together to summarize the main points. One member of each group joins three others who have read different articles and they trade information from their reading.

2 Use "Terms of Endearment" at a staff meeting.

This handout (insert for step 2) is a fun way to check your knowledge of how high-level standards connect to grade-level expectations. Allow time for dialogue.

3 Ask staff to locate the school's current status along the standards journey.

Insert for step 3 lists activities and milestones most schools go through on their journey toward everyday use of standards, benchmarks and grade-level expectations.

4 Agree on a timeline for "next steps".

Given your location on the Developmental Sequence, what seems a good next step? INSERT for Step 4 offers an action-planning tool on which staff can list the set of activities that seem reasonable targets for completion during the school year. Then set goals and timelines.

In general, the steps listed in the "Developmental Sequence" move through work outlined in Steps 5-8 below. Most are elaborated upon in a separate packet, as noted.

5 Agree to practice standards-based LESSON planning.

MI-Map Packet 6:2, *Grounding Lessons in Standards,* outlines steps for a teacher (or grade-level set of teachers) to identify the expectations being mastered in a given lesson, teach and assess those expectations and then debrief the experience—learning what went well and what to do differently next time. Commit—as a grade-level team or a whole faculty—to try it together and be accountable for reporting your experience to the community.

6 Work to involve everyone in the community in understanding how expectations are being used to make instructional choices.

Include parents, students, secretaries, custodians, aides and food workers in the movement toward daily use of expectations. It helps to ensure that the language begins to permeate newsletters, meetings, parent-teacher conferences, assemblies and hallways. INSERT for Step 6 offers a short activity that can demonstrate what an expectation-driven lesson feels like.

7 Agree to build cross-disciplinary UNITS that address multiple expectations at a time.

MI-Map Packet 6:3 Creating *Standards-based UNITS,* suggests a process for selecting a theme capable of consolidating multiple expectations in several disciplines, choosing appropriate expectations, and teaching and assessing mastery of them. Many experienced users insist this is the ONLY way to approach a curriculum framework as comprehensive as Michigan's in the limited time available in a single school year. As in Step 5, agree together to try this and discuss it.

8 Build a tracking system capable of recording levels of mastery for individual students for specific expectations.

MI-Map Packet 5:3 *Knowing Your Goals* outlines a MS-Excel spreadsheet-based method for keeping track of which students have mastered which expectations, so that unit planning can address gaps as they become apparent, and next year's teachers will know where they stand.

Getting more mileage from planning for a standards-based school

How thinking together about how to move toward deeper commitment to using grade-level content expectations to drive instruction benefits your school in regards to the following initiatives:

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

- NCLB's requirement for annual statewide assessment of student achievement means that Michigan's Curriculum Framework Standards, assessed through MEAP, will be the basis for assessing a school's AYP score.

Education YES!

- A major component of each school's report card is assessment data on student performance based on the Michigan Curriculum Framework Standards.

MI-Plan

- Step 6, pages 25-47 is *Aligning the State of Michigan Requirements, action plans and assessments.* This step addresses the state's Benchmarks and Expectations, and guides a school in thinking through its action plans from that point of view. A self-evaluation process for looking at strategies is included, using a strategies/interventions rubric.

Resources

People

Specialists

Most Intermediate School Districts have a specialist working with schools on curriculum alignment in their service areas.

Coaches

The *Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools* website lists coaches whose training has been provided by Michigan State University and supported by the Michigan Department of Education. Some are active in working with school culture in Michigan schools. Please visit:

www.abcscoaches.org

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