

AREAS OF CRITICAL ANALYSIS FOR CURRICULUM EVALUATION UNDER STANDARD TWO

Comprehensive assessment of the curriculum involves the following areas of analysis. Results of these analyses will be reported in audit findings under Standard Two and will have corresponding recommendations for correcting any reported inadequacies.

1) Direction for curriculum design: Auditors will examine policies, plans, or other pertinent documents related to curriculum that direct efforts in developing, evaluating, revising, and monitoring the comprehensive educational program in the selected schools to determine their adequacy.

2) Curriculum Scope and Minimum Quality analysis (Frame One): Auditors will first determine the extent to which written curriculum exists for all «content Area» courses, and then evaluate all available curriculum guides for quality, using Curriculum Management Improvement Model (CMIM) minimum guide components. These components include:

1. Outcomes: Clarity and specificity of objectives
2. Assessment: Congruity of the curriculum and assessment process
3. Prerequisite/Scope and Sequence Across Grades/Courses: Is there a preK-12 scope and sequence of learning outcomes or a listing of pre-requisites for any of the outcomes?
4. Resources: Delineation and alignment of the major instructional tools
5. Strategies: Clear approaches for classroom instruction

The rubric used for this analysis is presented here:

**Frame One Rubric: Minimum Component Analysis
Curriculum Management Improvement Model Frame One Analysis:
Minimal Basic Components for Curriculum Document Quality and Specificity**

Point Value	Criteria
Criterion One: Clarity and Specificity of Objectives	
0	No goals/objectives present
1	Vague delineation of goals/learner outcomes
2	States tasks to be performed or skills to be learned
3	States for each objective the what, when (sequence within course/grade), how actual standard is performed, and amount of time to be spent learning
Criterion Two: Congruity of the Curriculum to the Assessment Process	
0	No assessment approach
1	Some approach of assessment stated
2	States skills, knowledge, and concepts that will be assessed
3	Keys each objective to district and/or state performance assessments
Criterion Three: Delineation of the Prerequisite Essential Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes	
0	No mention of required skill
1	States prior general experience needed
2	States prior general experience needed in specified grade level
3	States specific documented prerequisite or description of discrete skills/concepts required prior to this learning (may be a scope and sequence across grades/courses if PreK-12)

Criterion Four: Delineation of the Major Instructional Tools	
0	No mention of textbook or instructional tools/resources
1	Names the basic text/instructional resource(s)
2	Names the basic text/instructional resource(s) and supplementary materials to be used
3	States for each objective the “match” between the basic text/instructional resource(s) and the curriculum objective
Criterion Five: Clear Approaches for Classroom Use	
0	No approaches cited for classroom use
1	Overall, vague statement on approaching the subject
2	Provides general suggestions on approaches
3	Provides specific examples of how to approach key concepts/skills in the classroom

3) Additional Frames of Critical Analysis: Auditors will evaluate selected district-developed curriculum documents (guides, pacing charts, curriculum maps, scope and sequence documents, etc.) in greater depth using the multiple frames of curriculum design analysis. These frames of analysis are possible only when the quality and specificity of pertinent documents are sufficient in content. The frames include:

Frame 2. Organizational Expectations Analysis

Under this analysis, auditors examine district expectations for written curriculum and compare existing curriculum documents with those expectations. Resulting deficiencies are identified and reported.

Frame 3. Alignment Analysis of the Minimum Basic Components (from Frame 1) for Specificity, Congruence (Match), and Feasibility

Under this analysis, auditors examine curriculum documents for cross-component alignment and congruence, as well as alignment with curriculum materials and resources external to the guides themselves. This may include (depending on contextual issues) multiple forms of analysis, depending on the quality and specificity of the curriculum guides, the materials, resources, and publicly-released items or information from external assessments.. Examples of possible areas of examination include:

1. Outcomes (Objectives/Standards/Student Expectations, etc.):
 - Precision of the written objectives: is there measurable verb?
 - Precision of written objectives: are objectives non-duplicative?
 - Quality of evidence and measurability: what is the standard of performance?
 - Feasibility of the number of objectives: is there adequate time within which to teach the objectives?
1. Assessment: Assessment analyses may be conducted with district-developed formative, criterion-referenced tests; publicly-released items from state or national norm-referenced assessments or from high stakes assessments; diagnostic assessments (such as reading assessments); and classroom-based assessments. However, priority is given to those assessments for which the data are collected centrally (at the district level) for use in programmatic, curricular, and instructional decision making.
 - Assessment content is aligned to content of each objective
 - Assessment context is aligned to context of each objective, if objectives are written to include context (e.g. givens, environmental conditions, and nature of student response)
 - Cognitive type of assessment(s) is aligned to the cognitive type of each objective
2. Prerequisite/Scope and Sequence Across Grades/Courses:

- Pre-requisites are congruent with the objectives in content, context, and cognitive type (where applicable)
 - Vertical Concept Spiral in the written curriculum across grade levels is evident—clarity of spiral—with increasing levels of difficulty of a concept or skill (content complexity)
3. Resources:
- Resource content is congruent with the content of the objective
 - Multiple contexts in resource are congruent with objective and different types of contexts (especially test item format—see deep alignment below)
 - Cognitive type of the resource is congruent with that of the objective
4. Strategies and approaches:
- Content of suggested strategies is congruent with content of objectives
 - Context of suggested strategies is congruent with contexts of objectives AND assessments
 - Cognitive type with which student is expected to be engaged during the strategy or learning activity reflects the cognitive type of the objective (or greater rigor than the objective)

Frame 4. Deeper Alignment Analysis

For the auditors to do any backloading (deep alignment) analysis there must be access to some publicly-released examples of the high stakes tests impacting the system. These could be publicly-released items, sample items in state information books, national assessment examples on the NAEP web site. However, the NAEP test might not be considered high stakes. The auditor would have to determine whether district leadership was interested in where their curriculum is with respect to NAEP before any analysis could proceed.

The following are typical analyses for deeper alignment, undertaken when possible and in limited scope:

1. Outcomes (Objectives/Standards/Student Expectations, etc):
 - Is objective content aligned to the range of content which the high stakes assessment item purports to evaluate (backload analysis)?
 - Is the cognitive type (verb) of the objective aligned to the variety of cognitive types which might be tested through the high stakes assessment item?
 - Does the objective incorporate multiple contexts in its description, derived from a possible range of test item contexts?
 - Does an examination of the sequence of objectives determine if enough time is given for students to master the learning prior to any high stakes tests?
2. Assessment:
 - Is the objective content aligned to the range of content the assessment item evaluates?
 - Does the assessment of the objective incorporate multiple contexts which are predictive of current and future high stakes tests?
 - Does the assessment engage students in the same type of cognitive engagement as the objective requires?
3. Prerequisite/Scope and Sequence Across Grades/Courses
 - none
4. Resources:
 - Is the resource content congruent with the range of backloaded objective(s) content?
 - Are the contexts of the resources congruent with the variety of backloaded objective(s) contexts?
 - Does the resources' level of cognition meet or exceed the level of cognition required by the objective?

5. Strategies

- Is the activity/strategy content congruent with the range of backloaded objective content?
- Are the activity/strategy contexts congruent with the variety of backloaded objective contexts?

6. Student work and engagement

Frame 5. Other Analyses

Frame five analyses are decided upon entirely in response to contextual issues of the district being audited. Specific areas of analysis are left up to the discretion of the lead auditor. These areas of analysis may include evidence of bias in curriculum documents, cognitive rigor, ELL strategies/approaches, research-based (best practices) approaches, among others.

It is important to note that these analyses are undertaken within the greater context of curriculum design and delivery; in other words, there must be some data collected concerning how the curriculum is delivered in the classroom environment to fully analyze alignment among the written, taught, and tested forms of curriculum, as well as information about the high stakes (external) tests in use.

To do this well, auditors collect samples of student work in the classrooms, observe classroom instruction using detailed forms for collecting these data, review selected materials and resources, such as an adopted textbook series, and analyze publicly-released test items where and when available.