



CURRICULUM AUDIT

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PURPOSE OF THE AUDIT


To assess our school's ability to align district and school priorities regarding curriculum, budgets, and student growth across the schools in the district. This will be used to inform school leaders on areas of strength and areas in need of improvement so as to encourage alignment for the benefit of students.



BOARD POLICIES

Overview:

This survey found that the majority of those taking the survey feel that policies are aligned with standards, equitable, and easy to access once you know where to look. (This was a point of confusion solely because many in the community may not know where to look for the information.) Those taking the survey feel that the challenge in board policies is writing them in a clear and concise manner that is easy to understand by those outside of the education field.



BOARD POLICIES

Strengths:

- Policies are easily accessible
- Resources are equitable across grades and subject areas
- Resources are aligned to standards and those who need them

Challenge:

- Stakeholders of the school and children it supports do not fully understand policies and procedures.



BOARD POLICIES

Research Based Solution:

Information on the board policies, procedures, and roles should be disseminated at every meeting or engagement (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). By disseminating this information access to desired information will become easier for those who wish to seek it. Also with this transparency comes trust and support of the policies and administration (Grogan, 2013).



RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADMINISTRATION

Overview:

Those who took the survey believe that the administration knows its role in curriculum development but does not do well in communicating with other stakeholders. The focus is on standard mastery and alignment not on student growth. Although there is mention of growth being a strength later in the survey and a comment regarding the community wanting students to be successful adults.




RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADMINISTRATION

Strengths:

- Mastery of the standards
- Expectations for growth in what students are taught is expected and understood
- Data is disaggregated to allow for unbiased evaluation

Challenge:

- Communication between stakeholders on roles they play is unclear and often undefined.
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RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADMINISTRATION

Research Based Solution:

Procedures for communication of goals, procedures, and responsibilities between all stakeholders will be created by the administration of school and the district's board. Communication will be accomplished by using multimedia sources such as Facebook, newsletters, the district website, and report cards (Grogan, 2013). This must be multidisciplinary in order to align all stakeholders' goals and practices to each other and students' needs (Drake, 2012).



CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Overview:

The participants all agree the curriculum is aligned with tests/assessments and is diverse across all areas. Participants varied between “agree” and “disagree” on the majority of the topics discussed (i.e., teachers follow curriculum, determining if there is enough flexibility, consistency and continuity, and curriculum being aligned with textbooks)



CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Strengths:

- Curriculum is aligned to state standards
- Curriculum is appropriate for students being taught
- Curriculum is diverse in who is represented in lessons/material taught


Challenge:

- Curriculum is not aligned with the texts that are being taught
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CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Research Based Solution:

A needs assessment is the first step in aligning curriculum and textbooks. This is a gap analysis of where the students are compared to where the district would like them to be (English, 2010). Analyzing the curriculum to determine the type of content, context, cognitive type, and standard performance is needed. This information can be put into a chart and revised yearly. This will fill in any “missing” pieces that affect the teacher’s planning and teaching (Downey, Steffy, Poston, & English, 2009).



TESTS and ASSESSMENTS

Overview:

The survey found that all participants are not formally assessed, the data is anonymous, and test data unfairly categorizes students according to their demographics. Those taking the survey differed in opinion on whether or not tests match the curriculum and if the public has knowledge of test results.




TESTS and ASSESSMENTS

Strengths:

- Tests address all levels of learning, not just lower level learners
- Data is anonymous
- Teachers evaluate and use test data to design and/or change curriculum

Challenge:

- Results are not aligned fully with curriculum and knowledge from tests are not regularly disseminated
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TESTS and ASSESSMENTS

Research Based Solution:

A curriculum based measurement (CBM) will be used to screen students to be identified as “at-risk” and use progress monitoring to improve their scores (Mercer & Keller-Margulis, 2015). Using criterion referenced measurement, evaluates the student’s progress as an individual, not comparing that student’s progress against other students (Smythe, Kibler, & Hutchings, 1973).



BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

Overview:

The responses indicated that the district is very purposeful with the distribution of the budget. It is agreed upon that the school priorities shape the fiscal priorities. However, teachers and school leaders are mostly unaware of their role in financially supporting curricular priorities.



BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

Strengths:

- There is a systematic process in place that addresses the assigning of funds
- Reports are detailed in a manner that allows for deep evaluation
- The budget supports district priorities

Challenge:


- Roles in budget development and funding priorities are confusing and unclear



BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

Research Based Solutions:

Historically, the Board of Education approves a budget set by the school treasurer which is dictated by State and Federal mandates. As curriculum needs arise, it is important for teachers and school leaders to communicate these needs to district leadership and government officials. It is important that new resources meet the needs of classroom teachers and external stakeholders (Grogan, 2013). Students in an urban school in Philadelphia are not receiving the same educational opportunities as peers in suburban schools because their needs have been overlooked by those that set the budget (Weinraub, 2013).



PRODUCTIVITY

Overview:

School leaders and teachers are working to align and revise current curriculum resources. Student achievement has increased due to these changes. Content area teams have met to evaluate and select new curriculum resources that will further align grade levels vertically.




PRODUCTIVITY

Strengths:

- Schools are showing improvement in test scores
- Programs offered are continuously revised
- Programs offered are continually evaluated for effectiveness and discarded when necessary

Challenge:

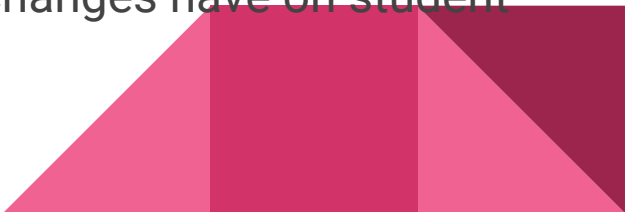
- Connection between money spent and student growth is not evident to all stakeholders
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PRODUCTIVITY


Research Based Solution:

Textbooks provide a surface job of alignment and although powerful and exciting tools must connect with actual learning to measure achievement (Downey, Steffy, Poston, & English, 2009). Grogan (2013) states that communicating regularly with community stakeholders about district and school progress improves community engagement and support. This could be done via a “Status of the School” speech or communicating via social media or newsletters.

Communicating these changes and the impact of these changes have on student achievement can be very powerful.



ROSEY'S REFLECTION

1. I learned that despite the numerous emails and phone calls we are known to receive daily, communication is a weakness that needs to be addressed. We need to effectively communicate not just speak on matters.
 2. I was surprised that communication was a weakness and that some teachers felt disconnected from the board. I think this is a two sided problem with teachers often not feeling comfortable reaching out for the information they need and the information not being easily accessible.
 3. This is the only audit they have participated in manly due to the lack of knowledge on the process or benefits.
 4. This has shown me that there are many aspects to being an administrator that are unclear and often overlooked. The alignment of every decision is crucial to success; however, it is often difficult to accomplish 100% alignment in all tasks on all days. Colleges are simply unable to prepare you for every situation.
 5. The statement, "The true measure of educational attainment is what students do with what they learn and when they can do what they want to do" aligns with most of my beliefs on educational leadership. Our focus should always be the students and what they need to be successful. While we are required to meet standards of the nation and state we must keep our focus on student needs. Every decision should be made to positively affect students in our care.
 6. Human vision entails looking at the whole child and what they need to be what they define as successful in life. We must consider all facets of learning when designing curriculum for all students.
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ROSEY'S REFLECTION

7. School philosophy should affect everything that a school does, decides, buys, plans, and/or creates. This is especially true when the curriculum needs to be considerate of a school's specialization (i.e. SPED, arts, religious, etc. focused education) and the students they serve. While I believe that all school's should be considerate of their philosophies, these situations are especially important due to the public view on the school's specialty area.

8. Curriculum reflects personal beliefs, lived experiences, and societal ways at all levels. At the district level these can be seen in the texts bought for teachers to teach. At the school level it can be seen in the professional development given and in the administration's expectations of what a classroom on task should look like. At the classroom level it is in the activities used to teach the standards and the topics discussed among students.

9. Different sets of curriculum requires different methods of teaching to different learners and learning styles. If these are not aligned, students' learning will be impacted in a negative manner. This requires constant evaluation of students' learning and curriculum measures including how they align.




ROSEY'S REFLECTION


10. Curriculum can be designed to stifle or spark conversation, creativity, and activism. The choice of what is taught deeply affects what is discussed and how it is understood. If you censor information on a topic then you miss an opportunity one child may have to shine on something that means something to them. On the other hand if you present all information freely you risk offending people in communities that do not believe in the dissemination of all knowledge. This can be seen in the constant debate over Sex Health Education or scientific theories.

11. Through this I took a deep look at the curriculum my school buys each year and realized, not for the first time, that it requires a lot of modification in order for it to align with our goals and beliefs as a school. The curriculum we use does not reflect our students or their needs. It is standardized to the point of holding no meaning for our student population. My understanding of curriculum development makes me seriously consider the drawbacks and benefits of changing this system we have. To allow for individualization and creativity. To give all who are affected by it a voice in what is changed.

12. We base everything we do off of things we have done, learned, seen, and been told. This is no different for educational leaders making decisions on the school they lead. If you have experience in something you will draw on it for similar experiences. For example, now that I have been through schools that focus on variety of instruction I will be able to consider what they have done and adapt things I view as beneficial in my school.



KRISTIN'S REFLECTION

1. I learned despite a focus groups intentions of developing a curriculum, not all staff members are going to accept it and be happy. There are so many opinions/options when discussing curriculum, all you can ask is the team to align the curriculum the best they can.
 2. I was surprised that staff's opinions could vary so widely. It was interesting to note how some felt they agreed with a topic while others strongly disagreed. This is showing a miscommunication of some sort that needs to improve.
 3. As far as my knowledge is concerned, this is the first curriculum audit. The school has participated in an equity audit in the past.
 4. This has shown me as an instructional leader, you need to have a general knowledge about everything. You are the one that makes the final decision and regardless of how well staff understands the decisions you make, it is always for the best of the school community.
 5. The statement, "The true measure of educational attainment is what students do with what they learn and when they can do what they want to do" means that no matter the ways the students learn, as long as they use it and are productive members of society. We as instructional leaders need to have students be our focus and the reasons we make changes in our school community.
 6. When developing curriculum, you need to look at the child as a whole and when you should introduce certain topics that will be age appropriate.
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KRISTIN'S REFLECTION

7. The school's philosophy should impact the curriculum in all ways. It needs to meet the needs of all students from all cultures and backgrounds. Philosophy influences my understanding of curriculum by giving me the background knowledge and exposure needed and then I develop my own opinions/beliefs from the philosophy.

8. Curriculum reflects personal beliefs, lived experiences, and societal ways differently. As the teacher, you can interpret curriculum through your activities and the way you interact with your students. Whereas, at the district level, it is less personal and more in the form of books and technology. If you have a curriculum director, they may guide you towards their beliefs and societal ways since they are in charge of the curriculum for the district.

9. The way curriculum is interpreted can be positive or negative for the students. If a teacher looks at the curriculum deeply, analyzes it, and determines the best way to reach her students it can be a positive experience for all. If the teacher only teaches what they think without analyzing or looking at in deeply, it can negatively impact the students. The students may not be exposed to the necessary skills needed to be successful or pass the state test and is not demonstrating mastery of the state standards.

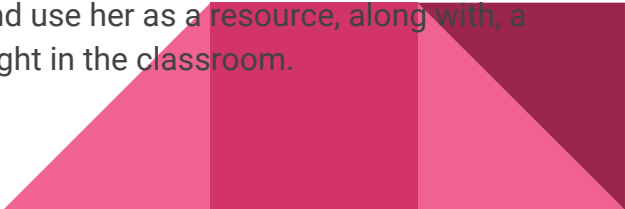


KRISTIN'S REFLECTION


10. Curriculum can positively or negatively empower the school community. It can positively empower by allowing students the ability to enhance their skills on all levels across the school day and guide them in the direction needed for them to reach their dreams. It can negatively empower students if the district only believes in one way and does not expose the students to other theories that are available for discussion. A student should be well rounded and be given all information and allow them to determine what they want to believe.

11. While working on this project, I learned that curriculum is up to the teacher's interpretation. Each teacher needs to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of their students. The curriculum is used as a guide and it is the teacher's job to develop rigorous activities and lessons for the students. It came to my attention about the "hidden" curriculum and how each district is different in how in depth the curriculum is or what is possibly eliminated (especially in social studies and science).

12. This experience has influenced my current teaching practices by wanting me to develop more rigorous lessons and eliminate any "hidden" curriculum. I realized I rely too heavily on our textbook and need to supplement more in alternative ways. Through this course, I want to develop a rapport with our curriculum director and use her as a resource, along with, a way to communicate with her so she has a deeper understanding of what is being taught in the classroom.



JOEL'S REFLECTION


1. I learned that there are many different thoughts and opinions regarding curriculum. Many think that you can start on the first page of a textbook in August and continue page by page through the textbook in order to make sure the curriculum is taught. It is the responsibility of school leaders can come together to truly map a curriculum and discuss various teaching strategies that will be used both horizontally and vertically across grade levels and content areas.
 2. I was surprised at how many teachers work independently of administrators and board members. The teachers that are being successful and are writing their own curriculum resources need to be empowered to lead and support new teachers. If everyone is held to the same standard and is provided identical resources, all students can be successful.
 3. This is the first curriculum audit that has been completed. The district is in the process of adopting new curriculum in several content areas and committees will have access to the questions and results of the audit.
 4. It is essential for school leaders to promote collaboration of school stakeholders in order to implement a curriculum that meets the needs of students, families, teachers, staff, administrators, school board and community. When the expectations of all of these individual groups are discussed, teachers can then implement a unified curriculum that is accessible to all students.
 5. Students need to be able to take an active role in their education. If a students is engaged in what they are learning and are able to learn by doing, they are better able to retain the information and apply it to similar situations.
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JOEL'S REFLECTION

6. Curriculum needs to consider what the child needs at that particular place and time in their life. It is necessary for teachers to consider the whole child and what they need (in terms of curriculum) to be successful.
7. As a school develops curriculum, it must first consider the student population and its philosophy of education. A school must consider how students learn and the cultural identity of the students and their families in order to develop appropriate and effective curriculum. When all of these considerations are made, teachers can maximize the effectiveness of their instruction.
8. Many teachers use personal connections and beliefs within their instruction in order for students to make meaningful connections to what is being taught. If students can see how content can be used in real-world situations, they are more likely to be engaged. Students can see how learning will benefit them in their future experiences and in society. However, it is also important to make sure that these beliefs and experiences are aligned to the philosophy of the students, parents and community members.
9. If school leaders set an expectation of curriculum to be used, yet teachers don't use quality instructional practices, evaluate student learning styles, utilize appropriate differentiation and assess student learning in a variety of ways, it is impossible for the curriculum to have a positive impact on student achievement and learning.



JOEL'S REFLECTION

10. If teachers have access to aligned curriculum resources, they can use those resources to develop a passion for learning in their students. Parents and school community members will be able to see the difference that an education can have on their child and the transformation that can be made. If more controversial topics are embedded within the curriculum, it may cause the need for mediation between school community members to reach an understanding of what topics are developmentally appropriate to be presented within the curriculum.
 11. I learned that teachers can present the same curriculum in many different ways. It is important for teachers to work collaboratively in order to make sure each student can maximize their potential within the classroom. If students aren't presented the same information in a consistent manner, then it can be difficult for them to demonstrate their learning. Some teachers expose students to a very broad curriculum that lacks depth while other teachers can give students an opportunity to deeply explore the curriculum.
 12. As I am the only teacher of my content at my grade level, it is important for me to align my curriculum resources with the resources of the grade levels above and below me to ensure that my resources and instructional practices are aligned with them. As we transition to a new textbook series, it is important not to rely solely on these resources, but strive to provide a rigorous education that challenges students to be the best that they can be. Should any bias be found within the materials, it is my responsibility to recognize it and eliminate it from the curriculum.
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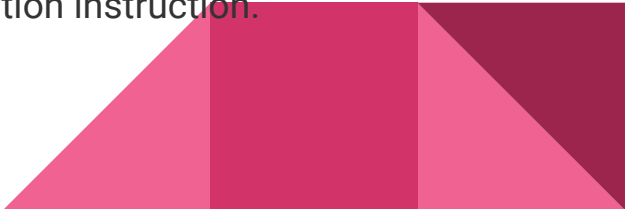


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