

# Curriculum Leadership Institute E-Hint

## Checklist for Principals—Implementation

The year that a new curriculum is implemented in a district is a year full of change. If the curriculum is to be more than another notebook sitting on a shelf, *everyone* must work together during this “implementation year” to clarify problems and find solutions for teaching and assessing new content and behaviors. CLI recommends that only one major core subject (math, reading/language arts, science, or social studies) be implemented per year. During this year, there should be razor-sharp focus on this subject at all grade levels, K-12.

Recently a group of principals, going through their district’s first implementation year, submitted questions to CLI concerning the implementation process at each of their buildings. Many of the questions were the same – asking for a “list” that would give them specific direction about what they, as principals, should be doing:

- *What specific pieces do you feel all administrators need to supervise in the change?*
- *As an administrator, what can I do to ensure the success of the new curriculum?*
- *Is it possible to design a tool to document and support the implementation of the new program? Perhaps a checklist?*

In response, CLI has identified **five major tasks for principals** during the year a new curriculum is being implemented by teachers. (See the checklist on the next page.) Obviously, principals will be using this list every year, as each new subject committee rolls out its curriculum. As the years go by, the “to do list” should become second nature and part of the culture of each building, as well as the district as a whole.

In CLI districts where scores are rising, building principals are major players in supporting and following the process of aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In districts where things have not gone as well, often the problem can be traced to building principals who have not provided the leadership or support needed. A recent *Education Week* article, “Tackling an Impossible Job,” addresses this crucial issue – the role of building principal in raising student achievement. It reports that:

*“Leadership characteristics are the second-strongest predictor of a school’s effect on student results. Only classroom factors, such as teacher quality, are stronger...and those factors are quite substantially affected by what people in leadership do.”*

## PRINCIPAL CHECKLIST

- 1 Monitor where each teacher is in the curriculum regularly throughout the year. “What outcome are you on?” should be a common question.**

Use pacing guides, validation forms, classroom visits — keep a chart for yourself with each teacher’s name and check off each outcome throughout the year.

- 2 Require the targeted subject to be a topic of discussion in grade level meetings (and department meetings of that subject). Check to be sure that it is regularly discussed.**

For the targeted subject, teachers should be sharing ideas and materials, solving problems together, looking together at assessment data and samples of student work.

- 3 “Talk \_\_\_\_\_” (math, reading/LA, science, social studies) at each faculty meeting. Ask what your teachers need.**

Some principals provide “mini-lessons” at faculty meetings for new or troublesome items in the new curriculum. At the very least, ask what they need and do everything you can at the building level to provide what they need. Ask for the things *you need* from the district. Don’t forget that staff development may be one of the things they need.

- 4 Check their planning — have them show you what they are doing to “prove” they are teaching directly to the new curriculum.**

Do their plans match both the content *and the verbs* in the curriculum? What specific instructional design pieces do you want to see in their plans? Are they planning for reteaching — both correctives and enrichments? Ask to see their assessments and the specific curriculum pieces each assessment matches.

- 5 Adjust building improvement plans and initiatives to include the new curriculum process.**

Changing over to new district-wide curriculum is a major initiative for teachers. Use the same words the district is using, build the process into your improvement plans, and adjust existing building-level committees to include the process.