

Curriculum Leadership Institute E-Hint

Does Your Local Curriculum Pass The "Local" Test?

Examine any state standards document closely and you will find a statement similar to this:

This document will assist Kansas teachers in planning local curricula and assessment for reading, writing, and literature, and will serve as the basis for the development of state assessments in reading and writing. However, this document is not intended to be a state-mandated curriculum. Local curricula should further refine and shape the way that students demonstrate their development in the communication arts.
(from Introduction to "Kansas Curricular Standards for Reading Education" July, 2003 [emphasis added])

So, is this how the standards in your state are being used by your district? Has local curriculum been planned? "Planning" local curriculum can take many different forms. Some districts buy a canned curriculum. Some simply take the state standards and ask individual teachers or individual grade levels to identify which parts of the standards they will use in their classrooms. Other districts have committees of teachers who actually go through a process to create local curriculum.

Does your district truly have local curriculum? Answer the following questions to see...

Is it clear when the document was created and by whom?

Is it clear who is responsible for using the document and where a copy can be obtained?

- Is it on the district website or is a hard copy K-12 version available in each building?
- Do parents and board members have access to the document?
- Are teachers encouraged to make copies of the latest version for classroom use (or are copies provided for them)?
- If there are Pre-K classes, do those teachers have a copy of the kindergarten curriculum?
- Do Title I and Special Education teachers have copies of multiple grade levels?

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Has the format of the local curriculum been explained, as well as differences in format from other subject documents?

- Were all state-tested indicators included and marked in such a way as to be easily identified?
- Were decisions made K-12 about which indicators (other than state-tested ones) to include at each grade level?
- Were some district-only indicators written at the local level?
- Are there appendix pages?
- Has formatting such as the use of **bold**, underlined, and *italic* fonts been used to enhance reading and understanding of the curriculum?
- Is there a glossary?
- Are there instructional examples?

Is each item listed in the curriculum considered "non-negotiable" for each grade level?

- Are both the state-tested items and the non state-tested items considered "non-negotiable"?
- Is it an expectation that students will be assessed over *each* item?

Has a "pilot" or implementation year been established for the new local curriculum?

- Is emphasis placed on instruction of the new curriculum?
- Is the curriculum considered in draft status until the end of the implementation year?
- Is teacher feedback gathered throughout the year regarding the curriculum, materials needed, staff development needed, and classroom assessments used?
- At the end of the year is the curriculum updated and presented as a final document?

Is the new local curriculum expected to guide instructional decisions and pacing?