



CLASSROOMS in ACTION

Your First Stop for K-12 Resources
www.ilclassroomsinaction.org



Webinar 1

What is Curriculum?

What is Curriculum Alignment?

Why Do Instructional Materials Matter?



Webinar 1 in a Series of 4

Webinar 1: What is Curriculum? What is Curriculum Alignment?
Why Do Instructional Materials Matter?

Webinar 2: An Overview of Instructional Materials Alignment Tools

Webinar 3: The Instructional Materials Review Process

Webinar 4: Curriculum and Alignment Implementation Challenges



Why is our curriculum and the instructional materials we use so important?





What is Curriculum?

Curriculum refers to the means and materials with which students will interact for the purpose of achieving educational outcomes.

Curriculum is defined in various ways, taking into account the **local context**.

Curriculum should include four basic components:

1. Goals: The benchmarks or expectations for teaching and learning, (standards); often made explicit in the form of a scope and sequence of skills.
2. Methods: The specific instructional methods or strategies in delivery of the skills and/or standards.
3. Materials: The media/tools used for teaching and learning.
4. Assessment: Metrics for measuring student outcomes/growth.



Let's Clarify!

Standards ARE the benchmark or end goals of a curriculum.

Your textbook alone

The standards alone

Your methods and strategies alone

Curriculum is the combination of the standards, collection of resources, and the strategies and methods you use to reach all students.



The Standards are the **Foundation** of a Curriculum

- ▶ The Illinois Learning Standards have been updated in many content areas.
<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Learning-Standards.aspx>
- ▶ Updated standards for **Mathematics** and **English Language Arts** adopted by Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) – 2010 (Grades 6-12 includes Reading and Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects)
- ▶ Adoption of **Science** Standards by the ISBE - 2014
- ▶ Adoption of **Social Science** Standards by ISBE- 2016



The Standards are the **Foundation** of a Curriculum

- Social Emotional Learning Standards
- English Language Learning Standards
- Foreign Language Learning Standards
- Fine Arts Learning Standards
- Physical Education/Health Learning Standards

Career Technical Education (CTE)

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Career-Technical-Education.aspx>



So how do we create an aligned curriculum?





The highest leverage factor, for improving student achievement, yet one of the most significant challenges facing schools is a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

Marzano, R. (2003).
What Works in Schools.



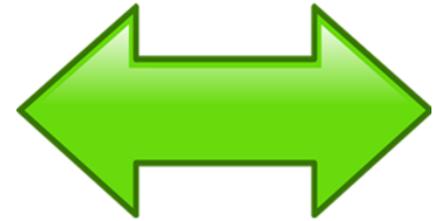
MUST HAVES

- Horizontally linked curriculum
(within the content, course and grade levels)
- Vertically linked curriculum
(across the grades)





Horizontal Alignment



Ensuring that curricular objectives, instruction, and assessment (whether local or high-stakes) are matched across each grade level and across content courses, throughout your system.

Key Considerations: Are we on the same page about...

- *What we teach*
- *When we teach it*
- *How we know if students are learning it*



Vertical Alignment

- *Expectations* aligned to the standards across grades
 - Build upon prerequisite skills
 - Increase in rigor
- *Assessments* aligned across grades?
- Are there gaps in the curriculum?
- Are there *overlaps in the curriculum*?
- Does the curriculum build *common vocabulary*?





District leadership to support
advancing curriculum
alignment starts with the
following beliefs.



Guiding Beliefs

Rigorous college and career-ready standards can improve and deepen student learning.

To reach these standards, what is taught matters. Teachers need high-quality, aligned instructional resources.

Determining curriculum alignment is a team effort.

The use of poorly aligned educational resources perpetuates low achievement postsecondary access gaps.



What are Instructional Materials?

Instructional materials are defined as resources that organize and support instruction, such as textbooks, tasks, and supplementary resources.



Keep In Mind: Instructional Materials Are Not Your Parents' Textbooks





Under the Instructional Materials Umbrella



Printed or Digital Resources:

- Textbook
- Collection of Individual Units or Lessons
 - District/Teacher Created Resources
 - Other Supplemental Resources



Why Instructional Materials Matter?

Instructional Materials Matter:

- Instructional materials can have **as large an impact** on student outcomes as teacher quality.
- The return on investment of elementary textbooks is **based on the quality of the materials selected**, not the price.
- In one study, the **average cost-effectiveness ratio of switching to higher-quality curriculum was almost 40 times** that of class-size reduction.

However:

- **90 percent** of districts report identifying or developing CCSS aligned materials as a challenge.
- **Only 37 percent** of teachers believe that their district or school's instructional materials are aligned with the Common Core.
- Nationwide, current **state adoption processes yield inconsistent findings** and provide limited evidence to support districts in selecting materials.



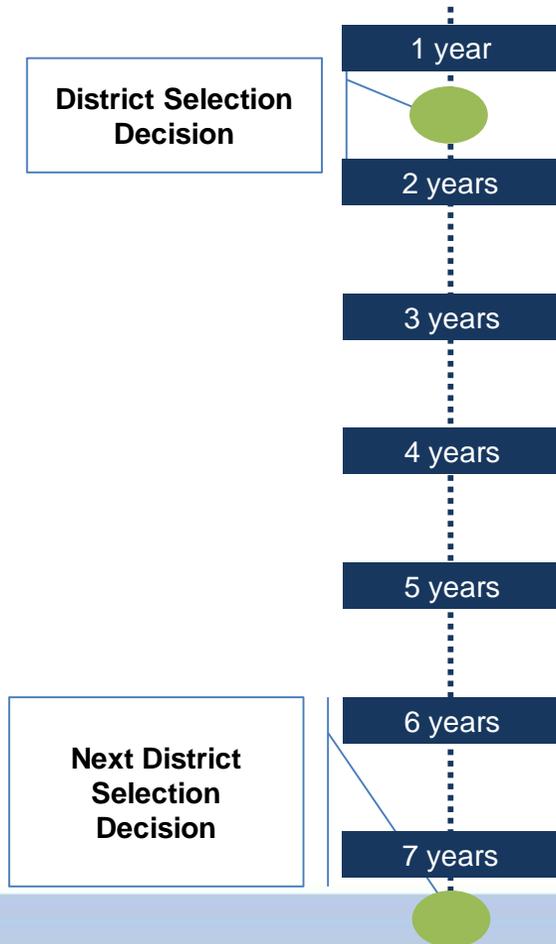
Thoughtfully
implementing the
selection process of
instructional materials
is an important step
to securing better
materials.





Materials Selection Is a High-Stakes; Legacy Decision

On average, states adopt materials once every five to seven years. While many districts follow the state timelines, others wait much longer in between selections. A district can miss the opportunity to serve a generation of students by selecting the wrong material.





Roadblocks and Challenges to Quality Instructional Materials Selection

LACK OF INFORMATION

- Schools, districts and states lack trusted, transparent information about the quality of the materials and tools they use to guide instruction.
- Due to this lack of information, selection decisions often privilege factors other than alignment or quality.

HUGE COSTS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Schools and districts spend billions of dollars annually to purchase materials to support student learning.
- Teachers and districts are spending valuable time adapting or creating materials, with uneven results.

NEGATIVELY AFFECTS

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

- Students who are already struggling, (often minority students or students from low-income backgrounds) don't have access to the materials they deserve.
- Teachers lack materials that allow them to support their students to meet the rigor of the standards.



Keep in Mind

1. The curriculum and instructional materials needed for each grade level and course must be:
 - Clearly articulated
 - Thoroughly communicated
 - Measurable
 - Rigorous enough to challenge each student
 - Relevant
 - Aligned to the standards
2. There must be vertical and horizontal alignment.
3. The entire learning community has a clear understanding of the concept of curriculum.



Leadership Must Consider

- How are classroom teachers involved in curricular decisions?
- Are those with content knowledge involved in the process?
- What other stakeholders would be helpful to the process?
- How well are the materials aligned to the standards?
- Which materials best support student learning?
- Which materials best support teachers?
- How do the materials work together to support students throughout their K-12 education?
- What other factors, beyond alignment, will be important for your community?



References

- G. Whitehurst. "Don't Forget Curriculum." Brown Center Letters on Education. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2009);
- M. Chingos and G. Whitehurst. Choosing Blindly: Instructional Materials, Teacher Effectiveness and the Common Core. (Washington, DC: Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings, April 2012).
- Education First. National Survey of 271 Educators. (Spring 2014.) U. Boser, M. Chingos, and C. Straus.
- The Hidden Value of Curriculum Reform. (Center for American Progress, October 2015.)
- Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Remillard, J. T. & Heck, D. (2014). Conceptualizing the curriculum enactment process in mathematics education. *ZDM The International Journal on Mathematics Education*, 46(5), 705-718.



Thank You!

- This is the end of Webinar #1, “What is Curriculum? What is Curriculum Alignment? Why Do Instructional Materials Matter?”
- Webinar #2 will describe the different alignment tools available to educators.



Questions?

Contact the ISBE Content Specialists for additional information.

Katie Elvidge (Social Science) kelvidge@isbe.net

Jill Brown (ELA) jbrown@isbe.net

Kathi Rhodus (ELA) krhodus@isbe.net

Erik Iwersen (ELA) eiwerse@ilstu.edu

Anthony Baker (Science) ajbake1@ilstu.edu

Jeanine Sheppard (Math/Science) jsheppar@isbe.net

Heather Brown (Math) hbrown@isbe.net

Lisa Ward (Learning Supports) lward@isbe.net

Kevin McClure (Learning Supports) kmccclure@isbe.net