

Does Your Local Curriculum Pass the “Local” Test?

Examine any state standards document closely and you will find a statement similar to this one from the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, page 5:

“These standards do not dictate curriculum or teaching methods.”

If all states and all content areas agree that you should not be using the state standards document as your curriculum, the first question you must answer is, how are your state standards being used within your district? Has the local curriculum been developed? Developing local curriculum can take many different forms. Some districts buy a canned curriculum (which we would actually call a resource). 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 a local curriculum? Answer the following questions to see...

- Does your staff use a curriculum document other than the state standards or a canned curriculum?
- 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 digital or hard copy K-12 version available in each building?
 - Do parents and board members have access to the document?
 - Are teachers encouraged to find and use the latest version to drive instruction (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?
- 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?

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- 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 consistently to enhance readability 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?
- Was there a "pilot" or implementation year for the new local curriculum?
 - Was emphasis placed on instruction of the new curriculum?
 - Was the curriculum considered in draft status until the end of the implementation year?
 - Was teacher feedback gathered throughout the year regarding the curriculum, materials needed, staff development needed, and classroom assessments used?
 - At the end of the year, was the curriculum updated and presented as a final document?
- Is the local curriculum expected to guide instructional decisions and pacing?