

RATIONALES FOR CURRICULUM DOCUMENTATION & MAPPING

Why should we document and map our curriculum? Why do we need to collect and analyze student work for evidence of what has been learned? Circle the rationale(s) you find most compelling. Discuss.

1. Because we need to have a shared understanding of the whole of our educational practices and content. That requires seeing it, analyzing it and making ongoing decisions about it. Curriculum Mapping software makes for robust analytics.
2. Because evidence of the operating curriculum helps us all understand what we are accountable for and what we can count on each other for.
3. Because we need to connect to one another interdisciplinarily. That requires that we can see the scope, sequence and pacing of each other's units and courses. We can see what the curriculum looks like from our students' point of view.
4. Because we need to scaffold, build on and reinforce one another's work laterally and vertically. That requires being familiar with one another's work.
5. Because we want to foster creativity AND continuity and mapping helps us to balance both.
6. Because we need to know on an ongoing basis the extent to which we are meeting and/or exceeding the standards we have set for ourselves (or the standards that have been set for us). That requires that we design and assess for them.
7. Because people come and go (staff/administrative turn-over)—but the curriculum is a Commons and should remain and evolve so it develops over time as an elegant integrated “whole system” and becomes more and more seamless, robust, reinforcing and effective. (Faculty's intellectual property can be protected under Creative Commons Licensing.)
8. Because mapping provides an historical archive of the evolution of our curriculum and instructional practices which is useful for action research, decision making and reflection.
9. Because Understanding By Design (backwards design) and writing it all down makes us better educators. “I am beginning to understand what Education for Sustainability is.” “I am beginning to understand what education is.” This requires thinking through our rationale for what we are planning, what and how we are teaching and what we are assessing. Less time is wasted, so more time can be devoted to learning. We are leaders. People will want to learn from us.
10. Because we need formative and summative evidence of what has been learned (student work analysis), so we can read the feedback, reflect on it, learn from it and improve our practice and student learning continuously.

Designing excellent curriculum with the future in mind produces excellent student learning and performance and is congruent with designing communities for the future we want. By design we meet our standards, we contribute to sustainable communities and we are prepared to reach for our full individual and collective potential and that of the living systems upon which our lives depend.



APPLICATIONS FOR DOCUMENTED & MAPPED CURRICULA

Inspired and informed by the instructional teams at the Denver Green School and Trevor Day School, NYC

WHAT CAN WE DO WITH THE WORK WE HAVE DOCUMENTED AND MAPPED?

Documenting and mapping units of study encourages improved instruction and student learning. Once curriculum units are documented and mapped, here are some valuable things we can do with them:

Focus on Student Learning

- Read the essential and guiding questions of colleagues across the grade level and/or vertically to broaden our understanding of what our students are learning before, during, and after we have them in our class
- Explore developmental expectations we have of students
- Assess whether the necessary structures or resources are in place to meet student needs
- Increase interdisciplinary connection-making by students through explicit interdisciplinary connections made by teachers across the grade level
- Review the vocabulary students are learning and using across disciplines and grade levels

Focus on Curriculum and Assessment Design

Analyze units for evidence of the following:

- The mission, vision and values of the school community are reflected in the design of students' learning experiences
- Lateral interdisciplinary connections
- Vertical alignment within and across the disciplines
- Common Core/State Standards alignment and integration
- EfS standards alignment and integration (knowledge, skills and attitudes i.e., The Commons, Systems Thinking, Creative Thinking, Ethics, Empathy, Risk Taking...)
- Opportunities for "specials" (Arts, Phys Ed, Languages) and "advisory/homeroom" to integrate their curriculum and teaching with the core operating curriculum
- Curriculum, instruction, assessments and performance criteria designed to move students through the progression of proficiencies from introductory awareness level, to working/practicing level, to mastery level knowledge and skills
- Congruence between the intended learning outcomes and the assessments and performance criteria

Focus on Instruction and Innovative Practices

Analyze units for evidence of the following:

- Assessment practices that measure and produce learning
- Employment of differentiated instructional strategies and scaffolding
- The presence and quality of focused instruction on writing, reading, analytical skills, historical thinking and/or any content, habits of mind, skills and proficiencies we want to see progress and reinforced across the curriculum
- Effective and current best practices (i.e., technology integration, variety of activities, learner centered instruction, assessments that produce learning, place-based and project-based learning, etc.
- The use of books, primary source documents and other resources used vertically and laterally



Review Units for Redundancies vs. Reinforcement

- Check laterally and vertically for areas where there are instructional redundancies and areas where instructional reinforcement is, or needs to be provided
- Assess strengths and gaps laterally and vertically. Celebrate the strengths and close the gaps

Make Performance Criteria Explicit

- Study how we are communicating quality to students across disciplines and grade levels by comparing performance criteria
- Work toward continuity and congruence as we develop and communicate performance criteria to use individually and collectively

Focus on Communication and Collaboration

- Increase the capacity to collaborate and communicate at and across each grade level
- Build community and mutual respect through shared language and shared understanding of our goals and indicators of success
- Peer critique units through critical and candid conversations
- Communicate and coordinate logistics and timing of lessons and learning experiences to maximize students' learning and interdisciplinary experiences
- Share best practices and creative ideas with peers
- Celebrate our ability to grow as learners and as a learning organization

What are the favorable conditions for documentation and mapping to flourish in a school/district?

- Professional Development and Coaching in Backwards Design (UBD), Curriculum Integration and Curriculum Mapping are extensive and ongoing, and new faculty is brought into the fold intentionally
- Time is regularly allocated for faculty and administrators to design/document and map
- Maps and especially analytics are viewed and used regularly in critical conversations among faculty and between faculty and administrators
- An agreed upon template(s) is used to map the relevant data that the faculty and administrators want to capture and analyze (see the Cloud Institute's protocol entitled, Applications for Documented & Mapped Curriculum for ideas about what to map and what to analyze)
- When possible, the unit mapping template and the UBD Unit Design Template are the same—so teachers can design, journal and map all in one place
- Mapping Software* should be user friendly and vocabulary should be shared and understood (ex. assessments of learning and assessments for learning...)

*If mapping software is not available yet, we recommend that faculty document their units on a shared drive like Google Docs to get in the habit of documenting, uploading and sharing their work on a curriculum chart in a central location. This will make the eventual transition to mapping software easier.

