Long Range Curriculum Planning
Curriculum MAPPING and RENEWAL

Curriculum Mapping is--

• a data gathering process about the existing curriculum using a calendar as an organizer.
• a means to foster positive communication among all professionals--making the “taught” curriculum known to everyone.
• feasible in terms of the required paperwork (not doing more planning, but making the planning known).
• a way to begin thinking about integration leading to a more connected, coherent curriculum.
• a way to identify redundancy and possible gaps.
• the data need to make decisions about needed adjustments in curriculum (aligning the taught curriculum with the intended and the tested curriculum).
• a way to apply a “quality control” process to the existing curriculum.

Benefits:

• Increased and enhanced communication among professional colleagues
• Clearer expectations for teachers and students
• Increased possibilities for integration
• Increased confidence that we are teaching what we need to teach
• Assurance that students have not experienced the same content and activities at earlier grades
• Ability to identify and incorporate the most appropriate and relevant resources
• Increased student learning with more creative and stimulating instructional plans
• We’ll be working smarter, not harder - - and be enjoying it more!

Guidelines:

• Everyone’s ideas and input are needed and valued. The data shared by each teacher is critical to the mapping process. There are no value judgments--there is no “right” or “wrong.”
• When postholing, make your “best guesses.” Adjustments can always be made later, but we have to start somewhere.
• The purpose of mapping is to provide important information for teacher decision making. It is not to “lock” teachers in to an inflexible structure. As always, individual teachers have the freedom to use their own professional judgment in making adaptations for their students. Mapping should allow teachers to teach the curriculum and not the textbook.
• Mapping is designed as a linear process to take place over several years or phases. In reality, the process often becomes less linear with several activities occurring concurrently.

Phase 1
Mapping (and/or Postholing) = Individual Teacher Curriculum Content Maps

Activities--Teachers “posthole” the curriculum by making initial decisions about curriculum priorities, coverage, pacing, and sequencing. At regular intervals (usually after each grading period) teachers revise their curriculum maps to reflect the curriculum actually taught, real pacing, etc. Teachers will use appropriate resources (e.g., previous years’ plan books, textbook pacing guides, TN curriculum frameworks,
Terra Nova objectives and student performance data, local school system standards, School to Career and other initiatives) in developing their maps.

**Steps:**
1. Decide which subject area(s) to map.
2. Obtain a year long calendar and mark off the days that are not “teachable” days (inservice, holidays, parent conference days, Terra Nova, schoolwide events, etc.).
3. Identify the number of days available for instruction per grading period.
4. Identify major content--topics/concepts (declarative knowledge and understandings) and skills (procedural knowledge-content related procedures, thinking/reasoning processes) planned to be taught. “Postholing” is accomplished by making initial decisions about content priorities, coverage, pacing, and sequencing. Be specific in identifying content and processes to be taught and/or reviewed*.  
   * When specific content and/or procedures are reviewed, those topics/processes should be identified on the map. Reviewed content could be designated in some way (e.g., asterisk, bracket, r).
5. Target any known dates for major curriculum-related events (field trips, festivals, etc.).

**Criteria for Quality--Individual Teacher Curriculum Content Maps:**
- The map is on a calendar (by week and/or by day).
- The map is complete (identifies content for the entire designated time period-year, grading period, or semester).
- Each individual teacher has developed a map. (Need to begin with individual data first.)
- The content is expressed in enough detail to communicate understandably to other educators (major concepts/topics/procedures and subconcepts/topics/procedures).
- The map reflects appropriate content and processes in terms of alignment with TN curriculum frameworks, Terra Nova objectives and student performance data, local school district standards, School to Career and other initiatives.

**Points for Reflection and Problem Solving:**
- Is your map well aligned with TN curriculum frameworks, Terra Nova objectives and student performance data, local school district standards, School to Career and other initiatives?
- Was the pacing of content about right given the needs of your students? Pacing and emphasis will change from year to year based on the needs of your students.
- Are your students experiencing difficulty with specific content and processes? What do you feel are the underlying causes of the difficulty? What might be some suggested actions to correct the difficulty?
- Are content and processes that are reviewed indicated on the map? Does systematic review appear to increase students’ retention of important content?
- Does the map reveal any patterns about the amount and use of available instructional time? What are some appropriate recommendations to protect instructional time?
- Does the map help you focus on delivering content based on student needs rather than just
“going through the text book?”

Result--Individual teacher content curriculum maps identifying important declarative and procedural knowledge and significant understandings. Maps may be developed one content area at a time.

Phase 2
Grade Level Curriculum Content Maps
(Same Grade - Individual Teacher Curriculum Maps)

Activities--Content maps will be analyzed with a “zoom” lens (by grade levels). If changes or revisions in the maps are desired at this point, they may occur as the analysis progresses. The analysis will result in findings, recommendations, and decisions based on the “current state” of the curriculum in relation to the “desired state.”

Steps:

1. Organize grade level/subject area teams. Identify one member as facilitator. Develop a large visual version of the grade level/subject area map (using chart paper, poster boards, etc.). It is important for everyone to be able to see the map.

2. Analyze your grade level map in terms of alignment with TN curriculum frameworks, Terra Nova objectives, local school district standards, School to Career and other initiatives. Are major curriculum content (declarative and procedural knowledge) and areas of deficiency addressed adequately? Revise maps based on your findings.

3. Identify strands (e.g., topics, skills, thinking processes). Thinking processes are often referred to as Habits of Mind or Lifelong Learning Skills and usually include higher level thinking processes (comparing, classifying, induction, deduction, analyzing perspectives, abstracting, etc.) as well as study skills, organizational skills, time management strategies, test taking strategies. It may be helpful to use colored markers or shapes to distinguish the different strands. Identify any “gaps” (topics/concepts, skills, thinking processes not adequately addressed). Revise the map based on your findings.

4. Identify any non-essential content, skills, or processes. Revise your map based on your findings.

Criteria for Quality--Grade Level Curriculum Content Maps:

• Maps are portrayed in a calendar format (not day by day, but by month, grading period, or semester). It is not important to have agreement about specifically when particular content and processes are taught and reviewed. What is important is that teachers of the same grade level or subject area have a good understanding of appropriate curriculum expectations.

• The map is complete (identifies content for the entire designated time period-year, grading period, or semester).

• The content of the map is expressed in enough detail to communicate understandably to other educators (major concepts/topics/procedures and subconcepts/topics/procedures).

• The map reflects appropriate content and processes in terms of alignment with TN curriculum frameworks, Terra Nova objectives and student performance data, local school district standards, School to Career and other initiatives.

• Maps reflect stimulating, challenging, relevant, cohesive curriculum.
Points for Reflection and Problem Solving:

[These several points of discussion are identified as a guide. Feel free to extend the discussions to any potentially productive area. Remember that this is a collegial and collaborative activity--one not intended to lead to immediate decisions, but one to help all teachers develop a better understanding of curricular demands.]

- Was the pacing of content *about right* given the needs of the students?

- Is *review* of important content and skills or processes indicated? Does systematic review appear to increase students’ retention of important content?

- Are your students experiencing difficulty with specific content and processes? What do you feel are the underlying causes of the difficulty? What are some possible approaches in dealing with these causes?

- What do patterns about the amount and use of available instructional time suggest? What are some appropriate recommendations to protect instructional time?

- Would students experiencing this curriculum be stimulated and challenged? Do all students have access to the curriculum (therefore, have an opportunity to learn all essential curriculum)? Are there opportunities to accelerate the learning for students ready to move ahead? Are there opportunities for students experiencing difficulty to gain additional help and assistance?

- Is it possible to identify points of intersection among teachers such as research papers, oral presentations, projects? Are there common rubrics, criteria, checklists, and common format requirements that could be used consistently (but developmentally appropriate-more detail, higher expectations)?

- Is it possible to identify areas for integration of content areas (or topics to be taught during the same timeframe)? The goal is to develop integrated units that would be considered *logical connections* or links, rather than *forced or artificial*.

*Result*--Horizontal grade level curriculum maps portraying total curriculum. *Curriculum priorities are expressed in terms of declarative content knowledge, procedural skills/processes, and essential understandings. Thinking skills (Habits of Mind or Lifelong Learning Skills) may be identified at this point. The realigned curriculum reflects “best practice.”*

**Phase 3**

**Multi-Grade Level Curriculum Content Maps**

*(Same Subject-Individual Teacher Curriculum Maps)*

*Activities*--Content maps will be analyzed with a “wide angle” lens (by subject areas across grade levels). If changes or revisions in the maps are desired at this point, they may occur as the analysis progresses. The analysis will result in findings, recommendations, and decisions based on the “current state” of the curriculum in relation to the “desired state.”

**Steps:**
1. Organize multi-level teams (one grade level with grade level above and with grade level below). Identify one member as facilitator. It may be helpful to have clusters (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) meet, then meet with grade cluster above and below. Use the larger visual version of your revised map.

2. Continue your analysis by examining the alignment with TN curriculum frameworks, Terra Nova objectives, local school district standards, School to Career and other initiatives. Are the essential areas addressed sufficiently? Revise maps based on your findings.

3. Identify strands (e.g., topics, skills, thinking processes). Identify any “gaps” (topics/concepts, skills, thinking processes not adequately addressed) and revise the map based on your findings.

4. Identify any non-essential content, skills, or processes. Revise your map based on your findings.

Criteria for Quality--Multi-Grade Level Curriculum Content Maps:
- Maps are portrayed in a calendar format (not day by day, but by month, grading period, or semester). It is not important to have agreement about specifically when particular content and processes are taught and reviewed. What is important is that teachers of the same grade level or subject area have a good understanding of appropriate curriculum expectations.
- The map is complete (identifies content for the entire designated time period-year, grading period, or semester).
- The content of the map is expressed in enough detail to communicate understandably to other educators (major concepts/topics/procedures and subconcepts/topics/procedures).
- The map reflects appropriate content and processes in terms of alignment with TN curriculum frameworks, Terra Nova objectives and student performance data, local school district standards, School to Career and other initiatives.
- Maps reflect stimulating, challenging, relevant, cohesive curriculum.

Points for Reflection and Problem Solving:
[These several points of discussion are identified as a guide. Feel free to extend the discussions to any potentially productive area. Remember that this is a collegial and collaborative activity--one not intended to lead to immediate decisions, but one to help all teachers develop a better understanding of curricular demands.]

- Is there a spiraling (or building) of important content and skills or processes (a reinforcement and extension of the content and skills rather than a repetition)?
- Is this an appropriate point to identify particular (“special”) instructional resources, materials including technology), and events? This could become a additional component or strand to the maps.
- Is it possible to identify any possible points of integration (or topics to be taught during the same timeframe)?
- Would students experiencing this curriculum be stimulated and challenged? Are there opportunities to accelerate the learning for students ready to move ahead? Are there opportunities for students experiencing difficulty to gain additional help and assistance?
• Is it possible to identify points of intersection such as research papers, oral presentations, projects? Are there common rubrics, criteria, checklists and common format requirements that could be used consistently (but developmentally appropriate-more detail, higher expectations)?

Result--Vertical across grade level curriculum maps portraying total curriculum. Curriculum priorities in terms of declarative content knowledge, procedural skills/processes, and essential understandings. Thinking skills (Habits of Mind or Lifelong Learning Skills) may be identified at this point. The realigned curriculum reflects “best practice.”

Phase 4
Identifying Assessments
(& Instructional Resources*)

Activities--Assessments are an important component of curriculum maps as they provide data on student progress. Assessments should be directly tied to the major declarative and procedural knowledge and essential understandings. They should include ways for students to apply their knowledge and to demonstrate their level of understanding. It is recommended that a range of assessments be developed to address major curriculum expectations. These could include informal methods, traditional tests as well as meaningful use--alternative or performance--assessments.

* At some appropriate point in the curriculum mapping process, it may be helpful to identify available instructional materials, technology, and supplemental resources. Major curriculum-related activities (field trips, festivals, etc.) could also be identified. This is a way to prevent overuse or non-use of resources and to identify needed resources.

Result--Horizontal and vertical curriculum maps portraying total curriculum with assessments linked directly to major curriculum priorities--declarative content knowledge, procedural skills/processes, essential understandings, and thinking skills (Habits of Mind or Lifelong Learning Skills). Instructional resources may also be identified.

Phase 5
Curriculum Renewal

Activities--After all subject areas have been mapped initially, specific subject areas will be targeted for review during a specified year. A long range plan for systematic renewal should be developed for each subject area. Renewal usually occurs on a multiyear or 3-5 year cycle.

Result--Curriculum will be current reflecting teachers’ best professional knowledge about what students need to know and be able to do.

Internet Resources:
www.mcrel.org (Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory) Go to Browse the Standards and Benchmarks, then to the desired subject area. Internet connections are well linked to other helpful sites, teacher resources including lesson plans.
www.ael.org/rel/state/tn/frametn.htm (Appalachia Educational laboratory) TN Curriculum Frameworks K-12 for the subjects of Language Arts (writing, speaking and listening, reading, and viewing and representing), Math, Science, and Health are presented with benchmarks for grade clusters and linked to internet sites and teacher resources including lesson plans.

www.enc.org/main.htm (Eisenhower National Clearinghouse of Mathematics and Science Education) This site provides practical activity ideas for teachers, full-text journal articles, professional development sources, and a comprehensive listing of all federally sponsored K-12 mathematics and science programs.

References:


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A work in progress
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