

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.**



SELF-STUDY GUIDE

2

CURRICULUM

**FOR 2012 SCHOOLS
COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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Curriculum

The written and taught curriculum is designed to result in all students achieving the school's 21st century expectations for student learning. The written curriculum is the framework within which a school aligns and personalizes the school's 21st century learning expectations. The curriculum includes a purposefully designed set of course offerings, co-curricular programs, and other learning opportunities. The curriculum reflects the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The curriculum is collaboratively developed, implemented, reviewed, and revised based on analysis of student performance and current research.

1. The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
2. The curriculum is written in a common format that includes:
 - units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills
 - the school's 21st century learning expectations
 - instructional strategies
 - assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics
3. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:
 - inquiry and problem-solving
 - higher order thinking
 - cross-disciplinary learning
 - authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
 - informed and ethical use of technology
4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.
5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.
7. The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

Directions for the Committee on Curriculum

This Standard Committee is charged with the responsibility of developing a document that demonstrates the extent to which the school is adhering to the Standard for Accreditation on Curriculum. Committee members should remember that the process of determining adherence to the Standard is a dynamic one. As evidence is gathered and discussed, the Committee's conclusions may change and evolve, be altered and refined. Once the evidence has been fully discussed and conclusions have been finalized, the Committee will begin the writing of the Narrative. The final step in the process is for the Committee to write an Executive Summary and to assess the extent to which the school is adhering to the Standard using the Rating Guide. This rating, and the Committee's list of strengths and needs for the Standard, will become part of the Executive Summary.

I. Gaining an Understanding of the Standard and Preparing to Begin

- A. Make a copy of this Self-Study Guide for each member of the Standard Committee from the website: <http://cpss.neasc.org>.
- B. Read and discuss the Standard for Accreditation on Curriculum so that all members of the Standard Committee develop a common understanding of the effective practices in the Standard. The Standard is comprised of both the narrative portion and the numbered indicators. The concepts in the narrative portion are manifested through the indicators. As part of your discussion, use the guiding questions and glossary from the document, *Explanation of the Standards for Accreditation*, located at: <http://cpss.neasc.org> under the "Getting Started" tab.
- C. Engage all members of the Committee in an activity to identify (imagine) what practices one would see for each indicator at a school which was meeting the Curriculum Standard at the highest level. For example, with regard to Indicator #5, Committee members might suggest:
 1. twice monthly early release days provide time for collaboration;
 2. school uses one early release day for cross-disciplinary collaboration time;
 3. two professional development days involve middle school and high school teachers in curriculum review efforts;
 4. school has a formal Humanities program for all tenth grade students with common planning time weekly for involved teachers.
 5. once the practices have been generated, compare them to the Standard's Rating Guide in the acceptable and exemplary categories on page 14 of this booklet.
- D. Engage all members of the Committee in an activity to review the Rating Guide for the Standard on Curriculum. Assess the extent to which the school is adhering to the Standard using the Rating Guide. Pay particular attention to the deficient rating. The Committee should report any and all areas of deficiency to the Steering Committee.

II. Collecting Data Related to the Standard on Curriculum

A. Data Already Gathered:

1. State Report

Examine your school's state report for implications related to the Standard on Curriculum. Identify the indicators in this Standard for which the specific data in the report is relevant.

2. Opinion Surveys

Review the results of the Endicott College opinion surveys administered to parents, students, and teachers with regard to each indicator in this Standard.

B. Data to be Gathered by Committee:

1. Gather the following information as evidence you will need later in this process. You will eventually need to **attach this evidence to the self-study narrative essay**.
 - a. The school's Program of Studies (2.1)
 - b. A list of the co-curricular activities offered by the school (clubs, athletic teams, competitions, etc.) (2.3)
2. Gather the following information as evidence you will need for each indicator in the Standard (as noted in parenthesis). You will eventually **make this evidence available in the workroom at the school**. *Please note: it is possible that you may not find evidence for all indicators.*

Indicator 1

The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

- a. A list identifying the 21st century learning expectations for which each curriculum area has assumed responsibility (2.1)
- b. A list of data collected and reviewed regarding the school's learning expectations when making decisions to add or delete courses or units from the curriculum (2.1)
- c. Examples of curriculum by grade level and course level (if applicable), indicating *where in each course students practice the 21st century learning expectations* (2.1)

Indicator 2

The curriculum is written in a common format that includes:

- *units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills*
- *the school's 21st century learning expectations*
- *instructional strategies*
- *assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics*

- d. A copy of a blank template which the school/district uses when writing new curriculum (2.2)
- e. Curriculum guides for all subject areas, including vocational/technical courses and e-learning courses, if applicable (2.2)

Indicator 3

The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:

- *inquiry and problem-solving*
 - *higher order thinking*
 - *cross-disciplinary learning*
 - *authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school*
 - *informed and ethical use of technology*
- f. A description of the conditions (mandates, directions, and/or structures) in place that ensures the curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding through inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills in all courses and levels (2.3)
 - g. A description of the conditions in place that ensures the curriculum emphasizes informed and ethical use of technology (2.3)
 - h. A description of the conditions in place that ensures the curriculum emphasizes application of knowledge through cross-disciplinary learning (2.3)

Indicator 4

There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.

- i. A description of the conditions in place (e.g., lesson plans are collected and reviewed by curriculum coordinators) which ensures the *written* curriculum is *taught* (2.4)

Indicator 5

Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.

- j. A description of the school's curriculum review cycle, including time devoted to the development, review, and evaluation of the curriculum (2.5)
- k. A description of time faculty spend in collaboration activities (e.g., PLC's, Critical Friends Groups, common planning time, et. al.) within content areas, across content areas, and with sending schools for the purpose of articulation of the curriculum (2.5)
- l. Representative district K-12 curriculum guides (2.5)

Indicator 6

Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.

- m. A report which includes the range of class sizes school-wide and by academic area (2.6)
- n. A report which includes expenditures over the most recent three year period for instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, and library-media resources (2.6)
- o. A report by individual curriculum area (e.g., English, science, etc.) which describes the negative impact (if any) of the facility on the delivery of the curriculum (2.6)
- p. A report which describes the negative impact (if any) of inadequate funding to support co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities (e.g., virtual programs, music, drama, athletic and other leadership opportunities, etc.) (2.6)

Indicator 7

The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

- q. A chart illustrating leadership responsibility for curriculum coordination and articulation (2.7)
- r. A chart/list illustrating expenditures over a three-year period for curriculum development, evaluation, and revision (2.7)
- s. Evidence that research (books, professional development, articles, etc.) was used during the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum (2.7)
- t. Other evidence deemed relevant by the committee especially relating to innovative thinking and practices that relate to curriculum.

III. Analyzing the Evidence, Drawing Conclusions, and Providing Supporting Details

Once you have gathered the data requested, use the prompts that follow to analyze and discuss all the gathered evidence and information as it relates to the various indicators in the Standard on Curriculum. Only after these steps have been completed should the Committee begin the process of writing the Narrative.

Prompts for Analyzing Evidence and Drawing Conclusions

1. The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the evidence gathered, including opinion survey results and any other relevant evidence, what does the evidence show about how the curriculum is *purposefully designed* to ensure *all* students *practice and achieve* each of the school's 21st century learning expectations?
- b. Based on an examination of the Program of Studies and the collected examples of lessons by grade level, course level (if applicable), and range of ability, what does the evidence show about the opportunities students have to practice and achieve the learning expectations?
- c. Based on an examination of the list of 21st century learning expectations for which each curriculum area has assumed responsibility, what does the review show about how the school ensures all students can practice and achieve the learning expectations?

Drawing a Conclusion

- d. State the extent to which the written curriculum is *purposefully* designed to ensure all students achieve the 21st century learning expectations.

2. The curriculum is written in a common format that includes:

- units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills
- the school's 21st century learning expectations
- instructional strategies
- assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the school's curriculum against the blank template, what does the evidence show about how the existing curriculum documents use the common format?
- b. Based on a review of the written curriculum with particular attention to content and skills for all subject areas, including vocational/technical courses and e-learning courses, what does the evidence show about how curriculum reflects the school's 21st century learning expectations?
- c. Based on a review of the curriculum guides with particular attention to essential questions and concepts, what does the evidence show about how the essential questions inform the content, skills, and 21st century learning expectations?
- d. Based on a review of the written curriculum, what does the evidence show about the range of instructional strategies and assessment strategies included in the written curriculum? *Please note: the committee chair is urged to collaborate with the Instruction and the Assessment committees.*

Drawing a Conclusion:

- e. State the extent to which the written curriculum provides guidance related to *essential questions, content, skills, the school's 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies, and assessment strategies.*

3. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:

- **inquiry and problem-solving**
- **higher order thinking**
- **cross-disciplinary learning**
- **authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school**
- **informed and ethical use of technology**

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about how the curriculum requires students to engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills *in all courses*?
- b. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about *trends in grouping practices* and how the curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and knowledge at each level?
- c. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about how the curriculum *emphasizes* inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking?
- d. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about how teachers meet to collaborate around *cross-disciplinary learning* experiences for students? What are the resulting examples of how the curriculum emphasizes cross-disciplinary learning?
- e. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about how the curriculum emphasizes authentic learning opportunities *both in and out of school*?
- f. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about how the curriculum emphasizes informed and ethical use of technology?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- g. State the extent to which the curriculum emphasizes that students engage in *inquiry and problem-solving; higher order thinking; cross-disciplinary learning; authentic learning opportunities* both in and outside the school; and the *informed and ethical use of technology*.

4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence (teacher practices, student work) show about the degree of alignment between the written curriculum and taught curriculum, especially in courses with multiple sections?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- b. State the extent to which the *taught* curriculum mirrors the *written* curriculum.

5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about the opportunities that enable the school and system instructional leaders and

teachers to meet regularly and to impact curriculum coordination and articulation?

- b. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion survey, what does the evidence show about curricular coordination and articulation between and among academic areas within the school and the efforts to support such coordination and articulation?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- c. State the effectiveness of curriculum coordination between and among all academic areas within the school, with sending schools, and, if appropriate, with technical centers.

6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about the adequacy of staffing levels (professional and support staff) which enable the school to maintain reasonable classroom teaching loads and to implement all parts of the curriculum?
- b. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about the extent to which instructional materials enable the school to implement all parts of the curriculum?
- c. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about the extent to which technology, equipment, and supplies are sufficient to support the curriculum?
- d. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about the adequacy of the library/media center's resources (include print and non-print materials, on-line resources, furniture, and space) in supporting the curriculum?
- e. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about the extent to which school facilities are adequate to deliver the curriculum? Indicate specific deficiencies, if any, by curriculum area and their negative impact on the delivery of the curriculum, e.g., are science labs properly equipped and adequate in number? Is wiring adequate to support technology? Is the building handicapped accessible? *Please note: deficiencies identified should be shared with the Standard committee on Community Resources for Learning for inclusion in its report.*

Drawing a Conclusion:

- f. State the extent to which staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center supplies, materials, are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.

7. The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

Analyzing the Evidence:

- a. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does a review of the evidence show about how the school uses student performance data, particularly as related to the school's 21st century learning expectations, to guide ongoing curriculum review and evaluation?

- b. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, describe how the review of current research has guided the evaluation, review, and revision of the curriculum.
- c. Describe the school's curriculum review cycle.
- d. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about how well the school uses student performance data (e.g., survey results, standardized test results, identified gaps/equity gaps, results of classroom formative assessments and other local assessments, portfolios, student exhibitions, common department-wide assessments, and assessments of student performance related to the school's 21st century learning expectations) to improve educational planning?
- e. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about professional leadership provided to ensure that a thorough and in-depth curriculum review occurs on a regular basis?
- f. Based on a review of the evidence, including the opinion surveys, what does the evidence show about the extent to which the professional staff has been actively involved in the process of curriculum development and revision in the last three years?

Drawing a Conclusion:

- g. State the extent to which the professional staff has been actively involved in the development and revision of the curriculum.
- h. State the adequacy of time and financial support to review, evaluate, and modify the curriculum.

IV. Writing the Narrative

- A. Write at least one paragraph for each indicator in the Standard; for some indicators with bullets, you may need to write several paragraphs.
- B. Write a conclusion for each indicator and underline the conclusion in the paragraph. For example, for indicator #5, "Effective curricular coordination occurs regularly within the various content areas and to some extent with the middle school which sends students to Millennial High School; however, coordination of the curriculum rarely occurs between the content areas."
- C. Write sentences to complete your paragraph that justify or support your underlined conclusion. Your evidence in these sentences forms the details that justify or support your underlined conclusion.
- D. This Narrative Essay should be 8-12 double-spaced pages and should be written in the third person. Sample Narratives can be found on the CPSS website located at <http://cpss.neasc.org>.

V. Writing the Executive Summary

Write the Executive Summary of the conclusions and evidence. Consult the Guidelines for Review of Standards Essays and Executive Summaries in the *Accreditation Handbook* (page 37).

Content of the Executive Summary

- Identify and list the school's strengths in adhering to the *specific indicators* in the Standard on Curriculum.
- Identify and list the school's needs in adhering to the *specific indicators* in the Standard on Curriculum.
- Use the rating guide provided on page 14 to determine the school's level of adherence to the Standard on Curriculum, based on the conclusions and supportive evidence in the Narrative Essay.
- Write a one-page summary of the evidence in the Narrative Essay to support the Committee's judgment of the school's level of adherence to the Standard on Curriculum, making sure you include the rating, e.g., "acceptable."
- Attach a list of the names, positions, and signatures of the Committee members responsible for the preparation of this Narrative Essay and Executive Summary. Signatures of Committee members attest to the thoroughness of the Committee's work and to the veracity of the Narrative Essay and Executive Summary.

VI. Using the Rating Guide

Purpose

The Rating Guide which follows has been developed:

- To assist schools in assessing their level of adherence to the Standard and thus to further understanding of the important concepts in the Standards
- To assist visiting teams in assessing the school's level of adherence to the Standard
- To inform the Commission as it considers the school's evaluation report, adherence to the Standards, and accreditation status

Please note: The Rating Guide is a guide for helping the school to determine the extent to which it adheres to the Standard. The Rating Guide should be applied to the Standard as a whole, not to individual indicators. The Guide is not a rubric, and it should not be thought of in that manner nor should it be used as a rubric would be. The value and importance of individual indicators has been incorporated into the various parts of the Rating Guide.

Directions

1. Begin with the *Deficient* category.
 - a. It is important to emphasize that every word in the Rating Guide has meaning, including transitional words and words such as *all, any, every, and, or*.
 - b. Because there are aspects within each Standard that are at the core of a school's ability to adhere to the Standard, those concepts are placed in the *Deficient* category and they are critical. This is the reason that *Deficient* is the starting place for use of the Rating Guide.
2. Read aloud the stem (the wording that begins, "A Rating of Deficient...") in the *Deficient* category and then move through each of the bulleted items that follow.
 - a. If the Committee members agree that each bulleted item is present, move on to the *Limited* category.
 - b. If the Committee members believe that the school has not met all (or most or a majority, depending on the language used in the Rating Guide) of the bulleted items, the school will then assign a rating of *Deficient* to this Standard, and its work is complete.
3. Read aloud the stem (the wording that begins, "A Rating of Limited...") in the *Limited* category and then move through each of the bulleted items, paying careful attention to the guiding words provided at the end of the stem, e.g. "but lacks:"
 - a. If the participants agree that each bulleted item is present, move on to the *Acceptable* category.
 - b. If the Committee members believe that the school has not met all of the bulleted items, the school will then assign a rating of *Limited* to this Standard. If the participants agree that each bulleted item is present, move on to the *Acceptable* category.
 - c. If the Committee members believe that the school has not met all (or most or a majority, depending on the language used in the Rating Guide) of the bulleted items, the school will then assign a rating of *Limited* to this Standard, and its work is complete.
4. Continue the process through the *Acceptable* category and to the *Exemplary* category, if appropriate.

RATING GUIDE

Curriculum

A rating of **DEFICIENT** is appropriate if any of the following exist:

- The absence of purposefully designed curriculum (course offerings, co-curricular programs, and other learning opportunities)
- Insufficient opportunities for all students to practice and achieve each of the 21st century learning expectations
- Lack of a level of adherence by the school to Indicator 5 in Standard 7, Community Resources for Learning, to sufficiently support the delivery of the curriculum

A rating of **LIMITED** is appropriate if the school has written curriculum that is purposefully designed and provides sufficient opportunities for all students to practice and achieve each of the 21st century learning expectations, but fails to adhere, at least minimally, to any of the following:

- The curriculum is written in a common format which includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills; the school's 21st century learning expectations; instructional strategies; and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic rubrics and course-specific rubrics
- The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and informed and ethical use of technology
- The taught curriculum aligns with the written curriculum
- There is coordination between and among academic areas and articulation with sending schools
- Staffing levels to support curriculum review and development, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient
- The professional staff has sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum

A rating of **ACCEPTABLE** is appropriate if all of the following are present:

- the curriculum, on the whole, is written in a common format including essential questions, concepts, content and skills, the school's 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies, and assessment practices including the use of school-wide analytic rubrics and course-specific rubrics
- the curriculum emphasizes, on the whole, depth of understanding and application of knowledge
- the curriculum, as taught, aligns, on the whole, with the written curriculum
- coordination between and among academic areas and articulation with sending schools, on the whole, occurs
- staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and resources of the library/media center, on the whole, are sufficient
- personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum, on the whole, are sufficient

A rating of **EXEMPLARY** is appropriate if all of the descriptors in the **ACCEPTABLE** rating are met on a consistent level and the school's curriculum evidences significant:

- use of essential questions, concepts, content, skills, and the 21st century learning expectations
- depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry, problem-solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and informed and ethical use of technology
- collaboration between and among academic areas and articulation with sending schools
- provision of personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum which uses assessment results and current research