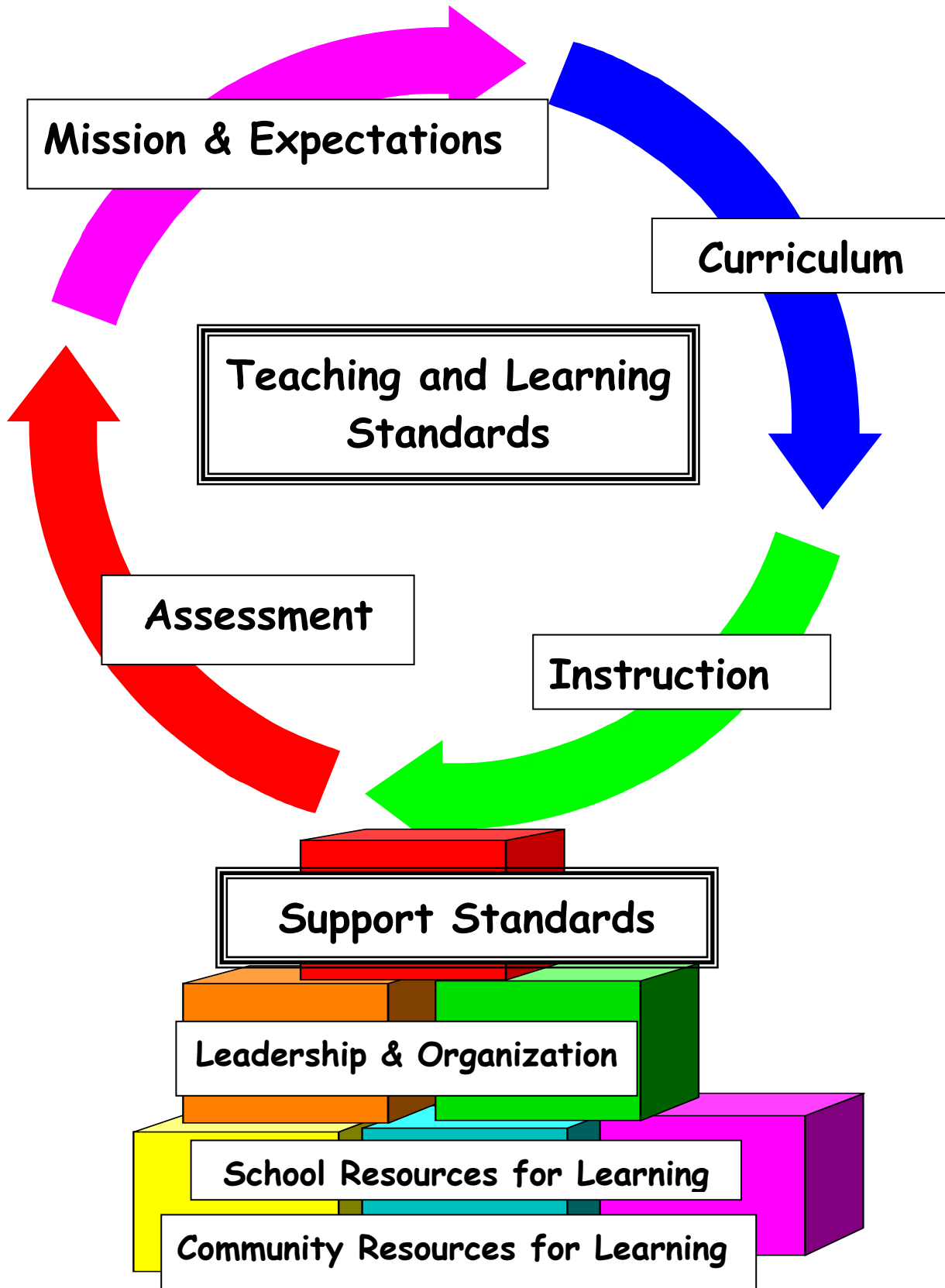


## **Introduction**

Using the indicators and guiding prompts, 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 keep in mind 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.

## **Before You Begin**

1. Make a copy of this Self-Study Guide for each member of the Standard Committee which is located at [www.neasc.org](http://www.neasc.org) by clicking on CPSS.
2. Review the contents of the document, *Explanation of the Standards for Accreditation*, located at [www.neasc.org](http://www.neasc.org) by clicking on CPSS, which was developed to clearly explain and illustrate the meaning of the Standard. The website includes guiding questions and statements for each indicator (available through the links indicated by the question marks) as well as a glossary which defines key terms and concepts referred to in the Standard.



## Teaching and Learning Standard

# 2

## Curriculum

The curriculum, which includes coursework, co-curricular activities and other school-approved educational experiences, is the school's formal plan to fulfill its mission statement and expectations for student learning. The curriculum links the school's beliefs, its expectations for student learning, and its instructional practices. The strength of that link is dependent upon the professional staff's commitment to and involvement in a comprehensive, ongoing review of the curriculum.

1. Each curriculum area shall identify those school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible.
2. The curriculum shall be aligned with the school-wide academic expectations and shall ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each of those expectations.
3. The written curriculum shall:
  - prescribe content;
  - integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations;
  - identify course specific learning goals;
  - suggest instructional strategies;
  - suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics.
4. The curriculum shall engage all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking as well as provide opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.
5. The curriculum shall:
  - be appropriately integrated;
  - emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.
6. The school shall provide opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus.
7. There shall be effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
8. Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library/media center shall be sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum.
9. The professional staff shall be actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course specific learning goals.
10. The school shall commit sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.
11. Professional development activities shall support the development and implementation of the curriculum.

## **Instructions for Completing the Self-Study Report**

1. 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, utilize the prompting questions and glossary from the document, *Explanation of the Standards for Accreditation*, located at [www.neasc.org](http://www.neasc.org) by clicking on CPSS.
2. Draw initial, working conclusions about the extent to which the school is achieving each of the indicators and the narrative portion of the Standard.<sup>1</sup> For example, with regard to Indicator #2, a working conclusion might read: “The academic learning expectations in the mission are embedded in many parts of the curriculum; however, the curriculum plan does not guarantee that every student in the schools gets equal or sufficient practice on each academic expectation.” Then the committee would have to identify the evidence to support this conclusion. On the following pages you will find the text of the Standard in bold followed by prompts for each indicator. Use the prompts for each indicator to guide your discussion of evidence needed to support the committee’s working conclusions about the Standard.
3. Gather evidence and/or information from departments/teams or elsewhere to support the committee’s working conclusions. You may want to create an Information Request Form to help gather the evidence from various sources. (A sample is provided on page A1 in the Appendix of the *Accreditation Handbook*.) The committee should also review the results of the Opinion Questionnaires administered to parents, students, and teachers with regard to this Standard as they are a rich source of evidence, keeping in mind that salient findings should be incorporated into the narrative essays.
4. Identify all relevant data in the School and Community Profile and ensure its inclusion in the Standards essay.
5. Analyze and discuss all the gathered evidence and/or information related to your working conclusions about the school’s adherence to each of the indicators and to the narrative portion of the Standard. During the discussion/analysis of each indicator, it may be helpful to take notes and to record pertinent information using the text of this Self-Study Guide. The committee should agree to each final conclusion and to the fact that the evidence is accurate and appropriately supportive.
6. Write a report of 8-12 double-spaced pages presenting and discussing evidence that justifies the conclusions of the extent to which you meet the indicators in the Standard as well as the concepts in the introductory paragraph of the Standard. Your report

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Conclusions are about what is happening now, not about what you should be doing or what action you plan to take in the future.

should discuss each of the indicators in order and have a conclusion for each indicator. Bold, italicize, or underline each conclusion.

7. Attach all requested documentation/information indicated with an \* in this Guide. Attachments are not included in the 8-12 page limit.
8. Prepare requested additional documentation/information indicated with a ⊗ to be available in the visiting committee workroom.
9. 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 38).

### **Content of the Executive Summary**

- Use the rating guide provided on pages 6 and 7 to determine the school's level of adherence to the Standard on Curriculum based on the conclusions and supportive evidence in the essay.
- Write a one-page summary of the evidence in the report that led to the committee's judgment of the school's level of adherence to the Standard on Curriculum.
- 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 for improvement in adhering to the specific indicators in the Standard on Curriculum.
- Attach a list of the names, positions, and signatures of the committee members responsible for the preparation of this Essay and Executive Summary. Signatures of committee members attest to the thoroughness of the committee's work and to the veracity of the Essay and Executive Summary.

A sample essay and executive summary are available on the Association's website, [www.neasc.org](http://www.neasc.org) by clicking on CPSS.

## RATING GUIDE FOR CURRICULUM STANDARD

### DEFICIENT:

- The school has:
  - no written curriculum; **or**
  - not identified nor has a plan to identify by curriculum area those academic expectations for which each department has assumed responsibility; **or**
  - not aligned nor has a plan to align the curriculum with the academic expectations.

**LIMITED:** The school has a written curriculum; individual curricular areas have identified the school-wide expectations for which they have assumed responsibility; and the school understands the need to align or is in the process of aligning their curriculum to the mission and expectations, but the school has **not**:

- completed the alignment process to ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve the academic expectations; **or**
- ensured that the written curriculum addresses a significant number of the following functions:
  - prescribing content; integrating relevant school-wide learning expectations; including course-specific learning goals; suggesting instructional strategies; suggesting assessment techniques, including the use of school-wide rubrics; **or**

- a combination of a **majority** of the following exists:

- The curriculum does not sufficiently engage students in inquiry, problem-solving, higher order thinking, or provide opportunity for the authentic application of knowledge and skills; **or**
- the curriculum is not appropriately integrated or does not emphasize depth over breadth; **or**
- the curriculum does not sufficiently extend learning beyond normal course offerings; **or**
- there is insufficient curricular coordination between academic areas and sending schools; **or**
- instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing, and library/media resources are insufficient to support the curriculum (**The school's level of adherence to the Community Resources for Learning Standard, Indicators 3 and 8 should be considered in making this judgment**); **or**
- professional staff is not actively involved in curriculum revision to a sufficient degree; **or**
- the school does not commit sufficient resources to the development, evaluation, and revision, of curriculum; or professional development activities do not sufficiently support the development and implementation of the curriculum

**ACCEPTABLE:** The school has a written curriculum, aligned with school-wide learning expectations, that prescribes content, integrates relevant school-wide learning expectations, includes course-specific learning goals, suggests instructional strategies, and suggests assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics. The curriculum engages students in inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, and provides opportunities for authentic application of knowledge and skills. Curriculum areas have identified the expectations for which they have assumed responsibility; **and** the school has:

- achieved **several** of the bulleted indicators listed under the **EXEMPLARY** paragraph below.

**EXEMPLARY:** The school has a written curriculum, aligned with school-wide expectations, that prescribes content, integrates relevant school-wide learning expectations, includes course-specific learning goals, suggests instructional strategies, and suggests assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics. The curriculum engages students in inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, and provides opportunities for authentic application of knowledge and skills. Curriculum areas have identified the school-wide expectations for which they have assumed responsibility. The school **also** has achieved a significant **majority** of the following:

- The curriculum is integrated and emphasizes depth over breadth; **and**
- the school provides opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal class offerings and the school campus; **and**
- the school maintains effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas and with sending schools; **and**
- instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing, and library/media resources are sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum; **and**
- the professional staff is actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum; **and**
- the school commits sufficient time, financial resources, and professional personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum; **and**
- professional development activities support the development and implementation of the curriculum.

## Curriculum

**The curriculum, which includes coursework, co-curricular activities and other school-approved educational experiences, is the school's formal plan to fulfill its mission statement and expectations for student learning. The curriculum links the school's beliefs, its expectations for student learning, and its instructional practices. The strength of that link is dependent upon the professional staff's commitment to and involvement in a comprehensive, ongoing review of the curriculum.**

- 1. Each curriculum area shall identify those school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible.**
  - a. \* Attach a copy of the school's program of studies.
  - b. ⊗ Provide a list identifying the academic expectations in the mission for which each curriculum area has assumed responsibility.
  - c. Assess the extent to which curriculum areas have assumed responsibility for the academic expectations in the mission.
  
- 2. The curriculum should be aligned with the school-wide academic expectations and shall ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each of those expectations.**
  - a. ⊗ Provide curriculum guides for all subject areas, including vocational/technical courses and e-learning courses, if applicable, indicating where in each there is alignment with the academic learning expectations in the mission.
  - b. Assess the extent to which the written curriculum is purposefully aligned with the academic expectations in the mission.
  - c. Describe how the curriculum plan/course requirements ensure that each student in the school is provided the opportunities necessary to demonstrate academic growth and achievement of the academic expectations in the mission.
  - d. Assess the adequacy of opportunities for all students in the school to practice and achieve each of the school's academic expectations for student learning as articulated in the mission.

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\* Attach requested documentation/information.

⊗ Provide requested documentation/information in the visiting committee workroom.

3. **The written curriculum shall:**
- **prescribe content;**
  - **integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations;**
  - **identify course specific learning goals;**
  - **suggest instructional strategies;**
  - **suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics.**
- a. ⊗ Provide evidence that the written curriculum identifies the relevant school-wide academic expectations for learning and course-specific learning goals.
- b. Indicate the extent to which the written curriculum provides guidance related to content, instruction, and assessment.
- c. Assess the adequacy of the curriculum in terms of the extent to which it provides guidance related to content, school-wide learning expectations, course-specific learning goals, instruction, and assessment.
4. **The curriculum shall engage all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking as well as provide opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.**
- a. ⊗ Provide evidence demonstrating that the curriculum requires inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills.
- b. Assess the extent to which the curriculum requires that all students in the school engage in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order-thinking.
- c. ⊗ Provide evidence that the curriculum (including vocational/technical courses, Advanced Placement, and e-learning courses, if applicable) calls for the authentic application of knowledge and skills (e.g., writing for audiences beyond the classroom, sharing portfolios with parents and critical friends, engaging in project work that leads to formal public presentations, participating in internships and school-to-career opportunities, etc.).
- d. Assess the adequacy of the curriculum (including vocational/technical courses, Advanced Placement, and on-line courses, if applicable) in calling for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.

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⊗ Provide requested documentation/information in the visiting committee workroom.

5. **The curriculum shall :**
- **be appropriately integrated;**
  - **emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.**
- a. Describe specific examples of curricular integration (including vocational/technical courses and e-learning courses, if applicable).
  - b. Assess the level of curricular integration within the school.
  - c. ⊗ Provide evidence that the curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding over breadth of coverage through the use of project-based learning, essential questions, assessment activities which promote higher order thinking, etc.
  - d. Assess the extent to which the curriculum emphasizes depth over breadth.
6. **The school shall provide opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus.**
- a. Describe opportunities for students to extend their learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus (e.g., senior project, work-based internships, community service learning, field-based projects, school-to-career, distance learning, college courses, technical college courses, e-learning).
  - b. \* Attach a list of the co-curricular activities offered by the school (clubs, athletic teams, competitions, etc.)
  - c. Describe how the available co-curricular opportunities cater to a diverse set of student interests and needs.
  - d. Assess the adequacy of opportunities provided for learning beyond normal course offerings and the school campus.
7. **There shall be effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.**
- a. Explain the structures and opportunities that enable school and system instructional leaders and teachers to meet regularly to coordinate and articulate the curriculum.
  - b. ⊗ Provide representative district curriculum guides to demonstrate that the K-12 curriculum provides a continuum of student learning expectations.

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⊗ Provide requested documentation/information in the visiting committee workroom.

\* Attach requested documentation/information.

- c. Assess the effectiveness of curricular coordination and articulation between and among academic areas within the school and the efforts to support such coordination and articulation.
  - d. Assess the effectiveness of curricular coordination and articulation with sending schools in the district and, as appropriate, with technical centers, as well as the effectiveness of efforts to support such coordination and articulation.
  - e. Assess how effectively the library/media center's resources, programs, and services are coordinated with and support the curriculum of various academic areas.
8. **Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library/media center shall be sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum.**
- a. Assess the extent to which instructional materials are current and sufficient to implement the curriculum.
  - b. Assess the adequacy of the library/media center's resources in supporting the curriculum.
  - c. Assess the extent to which technology, equipment, and supplies are sufficient to support the curriculum.
  - d. Assess the extent to which school facilities are adequate to allow for the implementation of the curriculum, indicating specific deficiencies, if any, by curriculum area and their negative impact on the delivery of the curriculum.
  - e. Assess the extent to which any modular/portable classrooms or any other outbuildings are adequate.
  - f. Assess the extent to which staffing levels (professional and support staff) enable the school to maintain reasonable classroom teaching loads and to implement all parts of the curriculum.
9. **The professional staff shall be actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course specific learning goals.**
- a. <sup>⊗</sup>Provide explanations and examples of how student performance data, particularly as related to the academic expectations in the mission, have guided ongoing curriculum review and evaluation.

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<sup>⊗</sup> Provide requested documentation/information in the visiting committee workroom.

- b. Describe the school's curriculum review cycle.
- c. Assess how well the school uses student performance data (e.g., survey results, standardized test results, identified gaps/equity gaps, classroom assessment results and other local assessments, portfolios, student exhibitions, department-wide assessments, assessments of student performance related to school-wide academic expectations, etc.) to improve educational planning.

**10. The school shall commit sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.**

- a. Describe the professional leadership provided to ensure that a thorough and in-depth curriculum review occurs on a regular basis.
- b. Explain the extent to which the professional staff has been actively involved in the process of curriculum development and revision in the last three years.
- c. Assess the extent to which the professional staff has been actively involved in the development and revision of the curriculum.
- d. Assess the adequacy of time and financial support to review, evaluate and modify the curriculum.

**11. Professional development activities shall support the development and implementation of the curriculum.**

- a. <sup>⊗</sup> Attach a list of a professional development offerings that have been provided to the faculty in the last two years related to the development and implementation of the curriculum, indicating those related to identified needs. Divide the list into two categories: ongoing professional development around particular curriculum approaches and short-term professional development offerings related to curriculum.
- b. Evaluate the adequacy of professional development activities in supporting the development and implementation of the curriculum.
- c. Assess how effectively the school uses assessment information to guide decision-making and planning of curriculum-related professional development.

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<sup>⊗</sup> Provide requested documentation/information in the visiting committee workroom.