

# Overview

## Rationale

A number of Scholastic Audits and Scholastic Reviews--conducted by external and internal / district teams—between 2000 and 2003 have consistently identified Standard 1 (Curriculum) of the *Standards and Indicators for School Improvement* as a potential growth area in a number of Fayette County schools. Audits and Reviews also identified facilitation of curriculum development by the district office as a potential area for growth.

Data from the audits and reviews became even more significant at the conclusion of a university study of highly mobile students across the district. Results showed that a large number of Fayette County schools have high percentages of students who move in and out of several schools during the course of a year. Curricula that may not be consistently aligned between schools may result in students missing large portions of critical content. On annual state-level mandated assessments, the resulting “curriculum gaps” could serve as *one* fundamental cause of well-documented achievement gaps across the district.

Additionally, the District Assessment Committee began developing draft criteria for identifying student requirements for promotion from one grade-level to the next. Of potential concern in the draft proposal was the lack of consistency among schools in implementation of content standards. Where curriculum gaps exist *within* schools, or *between* schools, exit criteria may put students at a disadvantage with regard to their academic progression.

Armed with this data, at the mid-point of the 2002/03 school year, K-8 school-level administrators cited the need for increased consistency in curriculum development and implementation. The charge set by administrators was to decrease adverse effects of high mobility among student populations by decreasing opportunities for “curriculum gaps” among –and even within—schools. This work would also reflect the district’s prioritized efforts to address potential weaknesses identified in Scholastic Audits and Reviews.

## Authority

From the inception of this process it was acknowledged that school staff, under the auspices of SBDM Councils, have ultimate authority over curriculum development for individual schools. No part of the work behind this document is intended to reduce that authority. District “authority” over curriculum development is limited purely to facilitation of work done within and among schools, and should *not* be interpreted as attempts to supercede SBDM Council authority per KRS160.345(2)(i)(1). The K-8 *FCPS Recommended Curriculum Map and Framework* is nothing more than a *recommendation*, and is nothing more than a starting point for facilitation of curriculum development across the district. School SBDM Councils are *encouraged by the district* to accept their responsibility for curriculum development. Only then will the spirit of “school-based decision-making” reach its highest potential.

## Process

The Department of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Standards (CIAS) was tasked with developing a *recommended* district-wide curriculum framework, and began that work in January 2003. Elementary and Middle School Content Specialists reviewed similar curriculum documents from other districts, merging a number of ideas to settle on a format meant not only to provide the recommended curriculum map and framework requested by school-level administrators, but also to put in place a system for standards-based instructional planning within school faculties, departments, and teaching teams.

During format design, small groups of teachers, PSA's, and principals were asked to provide their expertise to make the document more "user-friendly" for teachers. In many content areas, staff from the Kentucky Department of Education (Highly Skilled Educators assigned to the district and staff from the Region 5 Service Center) were consulted as well. This "sharing" process was continued through content area subject-rep meetings and informal sharing sessions throughout the duration of the work.

Once the format was confirmed, Elementary & Middle School Content Specialists and classroom teachers from across the district began the task of reviewing and revising Competency Assurance and Long-Range Planning documents to guarantee all *Core Content for Assessment, Program of Studies, and Academic Expectations* content items were included in the new document. The content items were grouped to provide teachers opportunities for unit development within content areas (e.g., *The Revolutionary War*), and presented in a document now called the *FCPS Recommended Curriculum Framework*.

Next, the potential "units" from each content area were mapped horizontally to identify sequences for yearlong content area work, (e.g., *7<sup>th</sup> Grade Science*), and were mapped vertically to integrate content areas wherever possible (e.g., *FCPS Recommended 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Curriculum Map and Framework*). This process resulted in the K-8 *FCPS Recommended Curriculum Map and Framework*, which identifies everything a child should be expected to know and do from Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, based on Kentucky's curriculum standards.

### **Flexibility**

This document was not conceived to be, nor should it become, the definitive guide to daily curriculum delivery in all classrooms. It was never the intention of school-level administrators or CIAS staff that every Fayette County classroom would conduct the same instruction, in the same way, on the same day.

*The FCPS Recommended Curriculum Map and Framework* provides a clear scope for what *must* be taught to *all* students, based on Kentucky's curriculum documents, and offers a basic sequence for delivering that content. Schools may elect to spend more or less time on content "units" based on students' assessed academic needs, may add supplemental content to more fully develop units, and may add school-level curriculum programs (e.g. Second Steps, foreign languages, character education programs). While that "fine-tuning" is *encouraged*, however, it must be noted that schools who unilaterally opt to make *significant* changes (e.g., deleting content from units, moving units from one place on the curriculum map to another, etc.) run the risk of getting too far "out of sync" with other schools. This increases the risk of recreating curriculum gaps within schools, or for students transferring from school to another.

### **Standards-Based Instructional Planning**

From the district level it is possible to facilitate development of the broad expectations for what students should know and be able to do. Using Kentucky's curriculum documents, *The FCPS Recommended Curriculum Map and Framework* creates a foundation that puts most content information into one place for Fayette County teachers.

Schools, teams, and individual teachers are expected to complete the rest of the document to meet the assessed academic needs of students. The result of this school-level work will be a comprehensive standards-based instructional plan. As schools work through this process, note the framework was designed to flow from left to right:

- ◆ Minimum content standards are established first (and presented in the Content and Demonstrator columns)
- ◆ Assessment items (mirroring state-level and teacher-made items) are established second, so that students know exactly what is expected of them, and opportunities for differentiation are identified.
- ◆ Activities are developed to ensure students are prepared for success on the previously established assessment items.

- ◆ Resources are gathered to match classroom activities.
- ◆ Differentiation strategies are identified in advance.
- ◆ Literacy / Content connections are planned for intentionally.

Once this work is completed for the entire school curriculum, it could be said a school has a well-articulated, well-planned, standards-driven instructional program. That work will be an involved process and will require continuous review and revision.

### **Professional Development and Budgeting**

Some portions of the curriculum framework document will be more challenging for schools than others. Identifying effective instructional activities will involve complex planning, and will include consideration of student learning profiles, cultural backgrounds, interests, etc., as well as knowledge of cooperative learning practices, hands-on activities, etc. When groups of teachers, or individual teachers, begin to exhibit strengths in this type of instructional planning, schools should pursue them as experts and enlist their help for others. When groups of teachers, or individual teachers, begin to exhibit need for assistance in this type of instructional planning, schools should pursue professional development activities to support improvement of the work.

Budget considerations will arise when schools recognize they may not have an adequate variety of texts to provide content-area and/or literacy connections, or resources to use manipulatives to teach algebraic concepts, for example. Revisions to Consolidated School Improvement Plans might follow, allocating funds to purchase needed resources, fund professional development, etc.

### **Future Work**

“Draft” was left on every page of the FCPS Recommended Curriculum Map and Framework for a specific reason. Curriculum development is a never-ending process. Schools and districts should conduct annual review and revision of their curriculum documents. The 2003 – 2004 version of the document is most basic. It provides content expectations only, and a recommended sequence for delivering that content. Future revisions, for example, will further refine the assessment portions of the document, providing teachers assistance in identifying and using pre- and post-assessments for the content items.

Recommendations for revision of this document will come from Fayette County classroom teachers. A District Curriculum Committee will be formed consisting of K-8 teachers from all content-areas. The committee will be charged with gathering input from across the district and making recommendations for changes to the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Standards. Subsequent versions of this document will reflect that teacher input.

Technology will dictate the highest-end use of the FCPS Recommended Curriculum Map and Framework. Electronic versions of this document currently provide a great deal of flexibility for classroom teachers with respect to the format, page setup, content, etc. of the document. In the future, additional information will be linked to the electronic version of the document, so that teachers might gather sample lesson plans for specific content, review lists of recommended texts linked to specific content, link to both pre- and post-assessment items, identify differentiation strategies, etc.

## **Credits**

### *Department of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Standards (CIAS)*

#### *Content Specialists*

Heather Bell, Elementary Language Arts / Literacy Specialist  
Marsha Benton, Early Primary Literacy Specialist  
Lori Bowen, Elementary Science Content Specialist  
Leeann Pope-Cornett, Middle School Language Arts / Literacy Specialist  
Bev Dean, Elementary Math Content Specialist  
Natalee Feese, Secondary Math Content Specialist  
Nancy Gilligan, Secondary Social Studies Content Specialist  
Sheila McIntosh, K – 12 Practical Living Content Specialist  
Dr. Frank Messina, K – 12 Arts & Humanities Content Specialist  
Donna Shouse, Elementary Social Studies Content Specialist  
David Taylor, Secondary Science Content Specialist

#### *Office of Career / Technical Education*

Dr. Mark Williams, Coordinator

#### *Teachers*

Leigh Buckley, Southern ES  
Vickie Coleman, Southern MS  
Staci Davis, Southern MS  
Janet Geisler, Glendover ES  
Brenda Owens, Morton MS  
Kim Sipes, Southern MS

Debbie Sogin, Morton MS  
Salle Staley, Beaumont MS

*Office of Instructional Technology*  
Maggie Wilson  
John Bryant