2018-2019 Curriculum Continuum

What is Curriculum?
Curriculum is all of the tools/resources (academic and non-academic), books, online academic supports, pacing guides, assessments, strategies, and instructional practices used within a classroom and throughout the district that are aligned with and to state standards in an effort to ensure that students acquire academic proficiency and/or mastery in any and all academic and social areas.

How is Curriculum Verified/Validated?
Curriculum is a living organism within a district that must be reviewed, studied, and altered continuously. Southfield, during the 2018-2019 school year, has had an internal materials audit (e.g., books) as well as a written curriculum audit (e.g., assessments, instructional plans, etc.) to identify areas of strength and need within the curriculum framework. Curriculum must be validated and verified by an expert third party, which can be an Intermediate School District (ISD) review team and/or a vetted curriculum company and/or unit. This ensures that the curriculum is guaranteed and viable through the lens of educational curricular experts. Oakland ISD has performed an internal curriculum audit and has shared their findings with district administration.

What did the Curriculum Audit Reveal?
Southfield partnered with Oakland ISD in 2010 to create a dynamic curriculum writing and review process. This process concluded in 2013. Last school year, in 2017, the district leadership identified a team to work on curriculum writing and development. Numerous documents were created by teachers and content leaders to update the curriculum. However, the written curriculum audit revealed gaps in pacing, resources, alignment to standards, and assessments within certain content areas and across schools within the district.

Does Southfield have a Curriculum?
Southfield has a curriculum framework that is in need of specific modifications to maximize its value. First and foremost, leaders and teachers must receive rich and deep training, to start, to ensure that there is a standardization of practice throughout the entire district. There has to be an established systematic process put in place to review, adjust, augment and eliminate tools and strategies based on student assessment results, academic trends, and global best practice. Once the development and activation of the assessment plan is fully implemented, there will be quantifiable gains in the instructional infrastructure in the district, which will translate into greater academic and social outcomes throughout the district.

What are the Next Steps?
Southfield Public Schools has created a curriculum and assessment development plan to calendarize priorities for staff professional development, which will include common core standards training, common assessment creation and alignment, curriculum mapping, and the effective utilization of supplementary tools/materials. The plan will be shared with the entire district during a professional development session (see the attached plan). Specific and measurable timelines will be utilized, so that the progress towards optimal performance can be identified and assessed on a monthly basis. District and instructional leadership can and will report progress in this area to all stakeholders.

(over for additional information)
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are content standards?
Educational content standards describe what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Here are links for the content standards in all core areas.

- Michigan K-12 Standards for English Language Arts
- Michigan K-12 Standards for Mathematics
- Michigan K-12 Standards for Science
- Michigan K-12 Standards for Social Studies

Are Textbooks Curriculum?
Textbooks are not, in and of themselves, curriculum. Textbooks are instructional tools that are a part of the curriculum framework. Textbooks cannot be curriculum exclusively, because textbooks change. Districts can determine to select different textbooks for different reasons, but what students need to know, content standards, remains consistent.

Does a School or District Ever Complete or Stop Working on Curriculum?
No. A district or school can never stop working on curriculum, because student needs change, instructional strategies change, and student assessments change. Curriculum involves a complex system of processes that have to change and be reviewed as students’ needs and competencies change. For example, the integration of technology forces school districts to change how they assess students. In the past, most academic assessments were paper/pencil assessments. Now, many or most assessments are taken online or through the use of a technological device. It is imperative that curriculum changes continuously to meet the needs of all student populations.

How Do You Know if Curriculum is Working Well in A District?
If a curriculum is working well in a district, there are four essential elements in play:

- The curriculum process is planned and systemic. There are scheduled dates, timelines, and processes that take place throughout the district. The district sets and mandates work around the heightened curriculum acquisition of all with respect to specific outcomes and contiguity.

- The curriculum process is led by curriculum experts. This is essential. Curriculum work is transformative and complex which, of course, requires adept skill and knowledge. Everyone in the district should be involved in the curriculum process, but vetted, content experts should lead and facilitate the training and coaching.

- The curriculum process is inclusive. Curriculum should reflect the varied learning styles and approaches that have to take place in schools to meet the needs of all children. Students should produce grade appropriate and varied activities that highlight the district curriculum’s inclusion of learning styles and differences into the framework of teaching and learning.

- The curriculum process is cyclical in nature. Successful curriculum is a cycle that includes the development of curriculum, the curriculum itself, the implementation of curriculum, and the evaluation of curriculum. The key work here being cyclical, as effective curriculum supports continuous growth, development and innovation in and outside of schools.