

The Efficient Curriculum Director's Audit Checklist

How can the curriculum be most effective? Answer: seek continual improvement through a cyclical curriculum auditing process to ensure there is a positive link between the assessments given and the results achieved.

Positive changes can occur in school districts if time is taken to complete curriculum audits. Most often, the point of the audit is to analyze the current state of the district and determine what is successful (and what is NOT successful) in increasing student performance.





The Checklist

This checklist is intended to be a useful resource and helpful reminder on the process of completing a curriculum audit.

- 1. In order to effectively audit**, there must be an understanding about the district's and schools' goals and visions. This might include a review of the mission statement, outcomes, and administrative focus.
- 2. Next, determine the areas of focus** or necessary categories that need to be included as part of the audit. (Certainly, these categories are interdependent and overlap; this is merely a condensed list for consideration.)

Within this category, consider the ways to effectively educate each student through curriculum, instruction, assessment, and social-emotional learning.

✓ Curriculum

- Curriculum is horizontally aligned (there is a clear relationship between curricular content standards, resources, and the assessments).
- Curriculum is vertically aligned (it reflects a logical order for teaching content from one grade level to the next).
- Professional development is ongoing for all professionals including teachers, instructional coaches, and administration.
- Curricular materials are authentic, standards-aligned, and accessible to all groups.

✓ Instruction

- Instruction is standards-based and student work reflects this.
- The instructors have content knowledge, deliver engaging lessons, and communicate the standards to students.
- All instructional staff use effective strategies, differentiate to meet student needs, and are responsive to students with exceptionalities or diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- All students are given effective instructional material in a variety of formats.
- All students are given exposure to various cultures and ethnicities.
- Opportunities are provided to the staff to collaborate and communicate.
- Instructional units or lesson plans are adjusted based off of assessment result analysis.

✓ Accommodations / Individualized Learning

- Instructional staff analyzes and uses diagnostic, formative and summative data to inform curricular and instructional decisions.
- Students are given effective interventions and barriers to participation are reduced.

✓ Social/Emotional Skills





- School culture reinforces self-discipline and responsibility.
- The policies promote social skills and conflict management as well as prevention and intervention programs

✓ **Assessment and Accountability:** quantitative and qualitative measures of progress and growth are used to ensure students being given an effective learning environment. Within this category, consider the following:

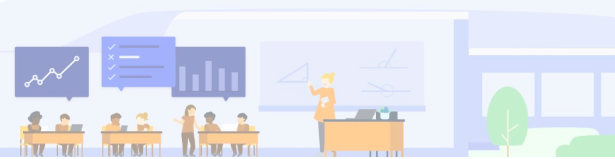
- Diagnostic assessments are utilized effectively., as measured by...
Assessments in the classroom are aligned to curricular standards/district goals and reflect mastery.
- Ongoing student assessments are varied and document student strengths and weakness.
- Reporting procedures, including progress monitoring and grading, are focused and inform both parents/guardians and students of academic progress.
- Students receive feedback that is frequent, specific, and timely.
- Assessments cover academic outcomes as well as social/emotional learning targets.

✓ **Leadership:** Manage educational environments and work to advance and improve the educational system

- District and school leadership communicate and act on a shared mission and vision statement.
The mission is reviewed frequently by both internal and external stakeholders.
- Leadership “lives the values” throughout the school including an openness to staff, student, and parent/guardian feedback.
- School-level leadership plans for general improvement and prioritizes educational excellence.
- Priority is given to making resources available for the school improvement process.
- School-level leadership communicates and emphasizes effective instruction.
- Measures are in place to see the impact of employee effectiveness and retention within the district.
Resources are allocated using a comprehensive budgeting process.
There is a formal process for ensuring the budgeting decisions align with achievement goals for all students.
- Leadership demonstrates managerial responsibility and actively assists staff in identifying and acquiring resources.
- School-level leadership allocates a time for core content as well as additional learning time for students who haven’t mastered the content. Children with exceptionalities are given time for extended learning.
- Leadership limits interruptions to instructional time.

✓ **Instructional Coaches**

- There is sustained support for professional development including coaching and mentoring.
- Leadership uses a systematic process for formal and informal monitoring of the effectiveness of teachers, instruction, and assessment information.
- There is a process for monitoring the use of instructional time and addressing problems as they arise.





3. Analyze Current Practice. Use current data, both quantitative and qualitative, to determine areas of relative strength and weaknesses under the school's current practices.

✓ **Quantitative:** Consider measures such as graduation rates; staff retention rates; state assessment data; student/staff survey statistics, etc.

✓ **Qualitative:** Staff or parent/guardian meeting notes, classroom observations, work samples from students, comments on student/staff survey, etc.

4. Prioritize the Needs. Once the current practice has been analyzed, determine the needs of the school or district and prioritize those needs. It is unlikely that all areas of need can be fully met initially. Therefore, effective prioritization ensures the greatest positive impact on student achievement.

✓ **Consider a road-trip analogy:**

- Where are we now? (Analyze Current Practice)
- Where are we going? (Goals)
- How will we get there? (Needs)
- If working within the context of a team, have each team member identify and rank priorities and use protocols for decision-making.
- If working independently, seek such information from administration, teachers, and students impacted by the audit.

✓ **When prioritizing the goals** of an audit, consider Sork's Importance and Feasibility Criteria (Sork, 1982)¹

These include the key questions on importance:

- i. How many individuals are affected by this need?
- ii. If we took this step, to what extent would it contribute to our goals?
- iii. Does the need require immediate attention or will it resolve over time?
- iv. How big is the gap between current conditions and the results we seek?
- v. To what extent would taking this step have a positive impact in other areas?

... and the key questions on feasibility:

- i. To what degree can this step contribute to reducing or eliminating the need it intended to address?
- ii. To what extent is the school willing to commit to this change?

5. Communicate Priority Findings. Share the prioritization (if part of a team) or review the feedback from those impacted (if working independently). Consider the importance and feasibility (Sork) of the possible priorities and which will have the most impact on student achievement.

¹ Sork, T. (1982). *Determining Priorities*. Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia





Use this step as a vetting process for which priorities have achievable action steps in the current climate of the school or district. As needed, gain administrative approval for the chosen goals. Consider where current resources are allocated and if gaining additional needed resources for the chosen priority is possible and timely.

6. Define Improvement Actions. In this step, configure clear and reasonable steps of continual improvement for the selected growth area. Some prioritized goals can be fully implemented immediately; others will need a longer time-frame to ensure the process is achievable and not overwhelming.

7. Define Metrics for Success. Decide key performance indicators that will help assess the success of the prioritized goal as part of the audit. Think: how will we know this is working? Again, consider sources of both qualitative and quantitative measures if possible. Develop both a short- and long-term timeframe for analysis. Balance the metric to indicate both positive and negative ends toward the chosen goal.

8. Implement and Measure. Implement the improvement actions from step six and use the metrics from step seven to measure the success of the implementation. Ongoing communication about the progress that is being made is key in this step as well. When analyzing the metrics, consider the road trip analogy: Are we heading toward our destination (goal) effectively?

If the defined improvement actions are truly ineffective, revisit earlier steps or begin the curriculum audit process again.

And finally, don't forget the role of technology advancements in helping manage the complexities of your curriculum. Consider getting a demonstration of Chalk Curriculum, a cloud-based solution in use by a large number of school districts.

[Learn more about Chalk Curriculum](#)

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