

Focusing on curriculum

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Inventorying the curriculum

Purpose	The principal recognizes the relationship between effective teaching and high-quality instructional materials. To strengthen that relationship within the courses in their schools, learning leaders use a curriculum inventory to learn which teachers have access to high-quality instructional materials and which teachers do not. Learning principals advocate and support the implementation of identified high-quality instructional materials; they guide those who do not have immediate access on how to find such materials.
Recommended time	3–4 hours
Materials	Tool 2.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Survey, page 3 • Curriculum Inventory, page 4
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the resources about high-quality curriculum materials at https://learningforward.org/report/high-quality-curricula-and-team-based-professional-learning-a-perfect-partnership-for-equity/ 2. Indicate schoolwide commitment that every course has a core curriculum grounded in high-quality instructional materials and each faculty member has the knowledge and skills for identifying essential resources. 3. Establish a baseline for support by identifying what is currently available to every staff member for their courses. 4. Use the Curriculum Survey, page 3, to collect data from staff. Encourage teachers to complete surveys in their grade-level or subject-matter teams. 5. Use the Curriculum Inventory, page 4, to collate results. 6. If possible, validate results with key district office administrators responsible for academics. 7. Use reflection questions with administrative staff and school leadership team members to set priorities for action.

Inventorying the curriculum, continued

Curriculum Survey

Grade level/Course	
What is the name of your core curriculum?	
Are there other supplementary resources used regularly?	
Who provided these resources?	
How do you know your materials are high quality?	
What do you view as strengths of the materials available to you?	
What do you view as challenges?	
What support do you need in ensuring your students access to high-quality instructional materials?	

Inventorying the curriculum, continued

Curriculum Inventory

Grade level/Course	Name/Status of available high-quality instructional materials (Core curriculum)	Observations/Reflections

Conducting a curriculum walkthrough

Purpose	Learning principals use curriculum-specific observations such as walkthroughs as important tools in reinforcing the expectation that teachers understand and appropriately use the adopted or recommended curriculum. This resource available at the Louisiana Department of Education website is an example of a framework for such a visit.
Recommended time	3–4 hours
Materials	<p>Tool 2.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example Curriculum-specific Observation/Walkthrough Framework, page 6 • Additional Walkthrough Resources, page 7
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage leadership team in reviewing various classroom/curriculum walk through tools. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gr 3–12: https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/school-redesign/2020-2021-3-12-classroom-support-tool.pdf?sfvrsn=6bb7981f_6 • K–12: https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/school-redesign/2020-2021-k-2-classroom-support-tool.pdf?sfvrsn=69b7981f_6 • Instruction Partners offers additional options here: https://curriculumsupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Curriculum-Walkthrough-Tools.pdf 2. Chart key elements of the templates as well as those that may have only appeared on one or two. 3. Discuss the elements and the potential contribution they would make to supporting curriculum and instruction improvement in the school. 4. Determine whether such an instrument / process should be part of the schoolwide improvement process or to support individual teacher development. 5. Given the preliminary decision, develop a draft for discussion / feedback from grade and subject matter teams. 6. Use feedback to finalize a draft document to be refined after initial use. 7. Make such walkthroughs an annual or semiannual component of the school improvement or teacher observation cycle.

Conducting a curriculum walkthrough, continued

Example: Curriculum-specific Observation/ Walkthrough Framework

Math-Illustrative Mathematics

Observer: Curriculum: Date:

Highly effective math classrooms are those in which students:

- Engage with a Tier 1 curriculum regularly and effectively (Priority 1)
- Receive appropriate and timely supports that allow them to spend a majority of their time in on-grade-level work (Priority 2)
- Spend the bulk of their time doing math and talking about math (Priority 3)

Observer Actions	Look-Fors	Teacher 1 (y/n)	Teacher 2 (y/n)	Teacher 3 (y/n)
Indicator 1: Students use the instructional materials every day	A. Tier 1 curricular materials are present in the classroom.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	B. Teachers are using the Tier 1 curriculum as intended. During the walk-through, use a smartphone or tablet to pull up the teacher version of the lesson (e.g., Illustrative Mathematics can be found on the Open Up Resources website). Is the teacher following discussion notes or prompts in the curriculum, using examples from the curriculum, and/or having students work problems from the curriculum? <i>Note: Teacher should be teaching an on-grade level lesson. See Standards by Lesson on pages 6, 14, 20 of the Louisiana Guide to Implementing Illustrative Mathematics.</i>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	C. Students are consistently doing the math to the level demanded by the Tier 1 curriculum. Flip through student workbooks to determine if students have used the materials consistently over time.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	D. Pacing is on schedule so that students will engage with the full curriculum during the school year. Access the calendar in the Louisiana Guide to Implementing Illustrative Mathematics .	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

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strative Mathematics

Indicator 2: Students receive appropriate and timely supports that allow them to spend a majority of their time in on-grade-level work	E. Curriculum-recommended supports/scaffolds are being used for students who are struggling with the math or who have special needs.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Indicator 3: Students spend the bulk of their time doing math and talking about math	F. Students spend a majority of the time actively doing math, not just watching the teacher or copying math from the board.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	G. Students have multiple opportunities to talk about their mathematical thinking and build on each other's reasoning.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Notes:

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Conducting a curriculum walkthrough, continued

Additional Walkthrough Resources

		Curriculum Walkthrough Tools																				
Math	Ready M	<p><i>This document is a compilation of curriculum-specific walkthrough tools for commonly used high-quality materials.</i></p>																				
ELA	Springb																					
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		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Content</th> <th>Curriculum</th> <th>Tool</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Math</td> <td>Zearn</td> <td> <p>This classroom walkthrough guide from Zearn can be used in Kindergarten classrooms (Zearn, 2017).</p> <p>This classroom walkthrough guide from Zearn can be used in grades 1-5 classrooms (Zearn, 2017).</p> <p>This Zearn classroom walkthrough guide from the Louisiana Department of Education can be used in classrooms of all grade levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Math</td> <td>Springboard</td> <td> <p>This Springboard classroom walkthrough guide from the Louisiana Department of Education can be used in classrooms of all grade levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Math</td> <td>Eureka/Engage NY</td> <td> <p>This Eureka classroom walkthrough guide from the Louisiana Department of Education can be used in classrooms of all grade levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).</p> <p>This document is a coaching protocol from Engage NY that can be used after conducting an observation in a classroom that is implementing the Eureka Curriculum (Engage NY).</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Math</td> <td>Agile Minds</td> <td> <p>This Agile Minds classroom walkthrough guide from the Louisiana Department of Education can be used in classrooms of all grade levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Math</td> <td>Illustrative Math</td> <td> <p>This Illustrative Math classroom walkthrough guide from the Louisiana Department of Education can be used in classrooms of all grade levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).</p> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Content	Curriculum	Tool	Math	Zearn	<p>This classroom walkthrough guide from Zearn can be used in Kindergarten classrooms (Zearn, 2017).</p> <p>This classroom walkthrough guide from Zearn can be used in grades 1-5 classrooms (Zearn, 2017).</p> <p>This Zearn classroom walkthrough guide from the Louisiana Department of Education can be used in classrooms of all grade levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).</p>	Math	Springboard	<p>This Springboard classroom walkthrough guide from the Louisiana Department of Education can be used in classrooms of all grade levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).</p>	Math	Eureka/Engage NY	<p>This Eureka classroom walkthrough guide from the Louisiana Department of Education can be used in classrooms of all grade levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).</p> <p>This document is a coaching protocol from Engage NY that can be used after conducting an observation in a classroom that is implementing the Eureka Curriculum (Engage NY).</p>	Math	Agile Minds	<p>This Agile Minds classroom walkthrough guide from the Louisiana Department of Education can be used in classrooms of all grade levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).</p>	Math	Illustrative Math	<p>This Illustrative Math classroom walkthrough guide from the Louisiana Department of Education can be used in classrooms of all grade levels (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017).</p>		
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Originally sourced from Instruction Partners at curriculumsupport.org

Leveraging the curriculum work of learning communities

Purpose	The principal demonstrates commitment to high-quality instructional materials by focusing work of learning communities on implementation of them. The principal provides protocols for learning team time, practice in using them, and support for implementation.
Recommended time	3–4 sessions involving 30–40 minutes each time
Materials	Tool 2.3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum Study Protocol, pages 9–13
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in continuous professional learning that introduces and supports teachers in the implementation of high-quality instructional materials Introduce curriculum study protocol to coaches, learning team leads, and others who are critical actors in the successful implementation of learning designs. Walk through and discuss the Curriculum Study Protocol, page 9–13. Determine whether each or selected teams will test the protocol with one or two upcoming units. Debrief learning experience with coaches, learning team leads, and others critical to success of the work. Continue to support the development of skillful leaders to facilitate use of the protocol.

Leveraging the curriculum work of learning communities, continued

Curriculum Study Protocol

	Questions to address as you reflect on the unit of study	Example: Math	Example: Language arts
Review			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scan entire unit and instructional materials, paying careful attention to the appropriate standards, objectives, lessons, assessments related to our student and educator learning goals. • What do the standards actually look like when students are doing them well? • How are they connected in this unit of study? • How are our assessments giving us the information we need about student learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the overall arc of the unit? • Where will the specific student learning goal be addressed? • How well do we understand the concepts essential to the student learning goal? • How will the students best understand the concepts and content essential for them to learn? • How do the assessments appear to align with the goals? How will we know from these assessments what students know and do not know? • What information do we need from our assessments to determine our instructional plans to best meet the students' needs? • What modifications do we need to make in them to get that information? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read relevant units and materials. • Make notes about essential things to remember, new strategies, and new assessment approaches. • Highlight key challenges the team will face in implementing the unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read relevant units and materials. • Highlight key challenges the team will face in implementing the new unit.

Leveraging the curriculum work of learning communities, continued

Curriculum Study Protocol, continued

	Questions to address as you reflect on the unit of study	Example: Math	Example: Language arts
Review, continued			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dig deep into the unit, lessons, assessments with colleagues. • Consider each of the questions carefully. Do not skip over any of them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the models for Learning provided in the lessons help students to see/understand how to meet the targeted learning goal(s)? • If one completes the provided assessments, what evidence of student learning for the targeted learning goal(s) would be seen? • Can we complete the teacher and student assignments within each lesson? • Will we need more than one lesson for our student to develop deep understanding and skill? • What instructional strategies and student work assignments are the most promising for moving all students to mastery? • What are potential student and teacher challenges and ways to address them? • How will we scaffold the learning for students who are behind? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create protocol to guide a discussion to address questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create protocol to guide a discussion to address questions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize specific areas for further study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which elements of the lessons require additional learning and support for students or teachers if we are going to achieve our goals? • What pre-assessments are essential for us to develop and use to understand what students know and do not know? • What prerequisite skills are needed to engage in the learning of the unit, by those students who do not have those skills? • What deep practice do they need? How long do we need to stay focused for students to develop proficiency? • What enrichment adaptations can support deeper learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore student struggles with using ratio and using percent to represent a ratio. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand student challenges in analyzing how a theme is developed over the course of a literary text through changes in character, setting, and plot, as well as the simultaneous expression of an objective summary of the literary text. • Understand how the selected text and use of two texts with similar themes but different development methods can support enriched, deeper learning of the targeted learning goal.

Leveraging the curriculum work of learning communities, continued

Curriculum Study Protocol, continued

	Questions to address as you reflect on the unit of study	Example: Math	Example: Language arts
Study			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has expertise in the areas we've identified, within or beyond our team? • What other sources of expertise can we tap? • What learning designs are appropriate for achieving our goals? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask instructional math coach to review concepts of ratio and reasoning. • Investigate concept of growth mindset and implications for our work. • Ask a team member with expertise to present a successful lesson(s) using our instructional materials. • Watch four online videos that demonstrate use of tables of equivalent ratios and double number line diagrams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask a team member with expertise with success in reaching this population. • Investigate concept of growth mindset. • Observe teachers online or in person successful with this population in other schools. • Practice the instructional scaffolds suggested in the teaching guide with each other; • Practice applying the student outcome with literary texts whose themes speak to the benefits of diverse populations for society.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on new knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did our learning challenge our understandings or assumptions? How did our attitudes, assumptions, and aspirations shift as a result? • What new knowledge, skills, and behaviors do we have as a result of our learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: Journal individually on our growth mindset investigation; devote next team meeting to discussion on new learning and how it has shifted not only knowledge and skills but also beliefs and aspirations. • Create short demo of powerful examples of how to reinforce ratio and reasoning concepts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on what you learned from the various learning models; consider how they affected your knowledge, attitudes, aspirations for your students. • Identify teacher actions in what you observed that appeared to have the greatest impact on the Title 1 students. • Discuss opportunities for integrating selected changes in the unit.

Leveraging the curriculum work of learning communities, continued

Curriculum Study Protocol, continued

	Questions to address as you reflect on the unit of study	Example: Math	Example: Language arts
Study, continued			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess new understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we feel prepared to implement new learning? How do we perform on student assessments related to the areas studied? Teachers should take their own assessments to better understand the standards, and how they are assessing them. What are possible misconceptions that students misconceptions may make and how are we going to address unfinished learning and gaps in knowledge? What resources and strategies are proposed for re-engaging students and providing additional enrichment opportunities for students performing at advanced levels? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: Work through formative assessments throughout unit. Take next unit test as a learning team and grade tests. Create learning challenges for learning team colleagues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work through formative assessments throughout unit. Take next unit test as a learning team and grade tests; Create new or refine available formative and summative tools to assess change in student efficacy.

Leveraging the curriculum work of learning communities, continued

Curriculum Study Protocol, continued

	Questions to address as you reflect on the unit of study	Example: Math	Example: Language arts
Practice			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine what the team will emphasize in the unit and how they will support students who do not have the prerequisite skills or who need additional support and scaffolding throughout the unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What will it look like when we teach the unit or lesson with the new knowledge and practices we've gained? What will we emphasize within the unit lessons to meet our student learning goals? For those students who do not have prerequisite skills, how can scaffolds and supports help them master the targeted learning goal(s)? For students who come into the unit already with mastery of the targeted learning goal(s), what enrichment adaptations can support deeper learning? Are these options available within the instructional materials or do we need to supplement? How will our shifts in beliefs and aspirations be evident? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify enrichment and remediation options within the unit and lessons, including any necessary supplementation or adaptation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify how to provide tiered support, enrichment, and options within the unit and lessons. Highlight what is most appropriate for target population within each lesson. Add tiered support or enrichment where data indicate such choices are applicable, including any necessary supplementation or adaptation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearse modified lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which content or lesson segments would we benefit from rehearsing? What do we learn as we practice? How well do our lessons appear to work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-teach two new lessons with learning team and coach at upcoming meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice teach a lesson segment with a small group of students and ask other teachers to observe.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine lessons as necessary before implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What changes in our lessons seem necessary? Based on what data? What improvements will we make? To what degree did the small group of students in the rehearsed lesson demonstrate evidence of achieving the targeted learning goal? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve lessons after rehearsals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve lessons after rehearsals.

Source: "Tool 5.5: Designing a learning agenda" in *Becoming a Learning Team: A Guide to a Teacher-led Cycle of Continuous Improvement*, Second edition by S. Hirsh and T. Crow. Copyright 2019 Learning Forward.

Monitoring the learning cycle

Purpose	Principal participation with learning teams during the monitoring and reflection phases of the learning cycle demonstrates principal commitment to the process as well as keeps principal informed of the progress of each team.
Recommended time	One or two sessions with learning teams during the scheduling, monitoring, and reflection phases of learning cycle(s)
Materials	<p>Tool 2.4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Learning Team Cycle, page 15, and excerpt from <i>Becoming a Learning Team</i>, Second edition • Five-Stage Cycle Reflection Guide, pages 16–19 • Learning Cycle Calendar, page 20
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the five-stage Teacher Learning Team Cycle, page 15. The cycle and further explanation are found on pages 18–22 in <i>Becoming a Learning Team</i>. See also The Learning Principal, Tool 1.2: Supporting Learning Teams. 2. With assistant principals, coaches, and team leads, review the Five Stage Cycle Reflection Guide on pages 16–19. 3. Determine whether teams will complete the template as they transition to a new cycle on the calendar on page 20 or use it to support reflection during Stage 5. 4. Ask teams to inform you when the tool is on their agenda so that you may be present to observe and support as necessary. 5. Look and listen for evidence that the team plan is informing and strengthening teacher practice. 6. Acknowledge success and encourage commitment to those areas where improvement is required.

Monitoring the learning cycle, continued

Teacher Learning Team Cycle



Monitoring the learning cycle, continued

Five-Stage Reflection Cycle Guide

Stages	Reflections	Notes
Stage 1: Analyzing data		
How successful were we as a learning team in analyzing and discussing student needs and our own performance data?		
What do we need to do differently in our next learning cycle to increase our effectiveness in understanding students' learning strengths and challenges?		
Stage 2: Setting goals		
How successful were we in setting student learning goals and complementary team learning goals focused on our teaching and its impact on student learning?		
What adjustments do we need to make in our goal setting system to ensure they are strategic and valued by students?		

Monitoring the learning cycle, continued

Five-Stage Reflection Cycle Guide, continued

Stages	Reflections	Notes
Stage 3: Learning individually and collaboratively		
How deeply did we study our curriculum materials and units of study to effectively use them to achieve our and our students' learning goals?		
How successful was our learning team in researching and studying successful strategies for addressing student needs and discussing applications of what we studied? In sharing successful strategies that different members currently use?		
How successful was our learning team in identifying relevant and useful learning options and instructional strategies in our curriculum materials to help us achieve our goals?		
How successful were we in designing new lessons together and teaching them effectively as we implemented new approaches?		
What shifts will we make next time to increase our effectiveness in learning together?		

Monitoring the learning cycle, continued

Five-Stage Reflection Cycle Guide, continued

Stages	Reflections	Notes
Stage 4: Implementing new learning		
How successful were we in trying out the new approaches to, materials, and techniques for teaching and learning that we had planned?		
In what ways did we support one other in our learning together?		
What additional and valuable support might we give one other as we move to our next cycle?		

Monitoring the learning cycle, continued

Five-Stage Reflection Cycle Guide, continued

Stages	Reflections	Notes
Stage 5: Monitoring, assessing, and adjusting practice		
How close did our students come to achieving their goals? How close did we come to meeting our intended outcomes?		
What do we need to do next for students who did not show proficiency?		
How will we serve any students who need additional support?		
How well did the new strategies that we implemented impact our students' achievement?		
What do we need to learn next to continue to increase our effectiveness and make positive impacts on student outcomes?		

Monitoring the learning cycle, continued

Learning Cycle Calendar

Scheduling two learning cycles

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
Stage 1: Analyze data	Learning Cycle 1						Learning Cycle 2												
Stage 2: Set goals		Learning Cycle 1						Learning Cycle 2											
Stage 3: Learn individually and collaboratively			Learning Cycle 1							Learning Cycle 2									
Stage 4: Implement new learning							Learning Cycle 1					Learning Cycle 2							
Stage 5: Monitor, assess, and adjust practice									Learning Cycle 1					Learning Cycle 2					

Source: Reprinted with permission. Figure 2.2, p. 24 in *Becoming a Learning Team: A Guide to a Teacher-led Cycle of Continuous Improvement*, Second edition by S. Hirsh and T. Crow. Copyright 2019 Learning Forward.