

The Manchester Public Schools curriculum and programs are designed to produce optimal student achievement for students Pre K- 12 and beyond. Based on a shared vision and mission, best practices in planning, instruction and assessing are implemented to accomplish excellence in all areas of student development. The evaluation of the MPS instructional program emphasizes the role that standards and curriculum frameworks play to inform curriculum development and outlines a five-year curriculum review process to ensure the curriculum is rigorous, achievable and aligned to the vision of the district. Professional staff, including outside consultants will support the review and continual revision of curriculum and programs. The Superintendent and/or designees will inform the Board regarding new and revised curriculum and programs as it relates to the cycle of revision and evaluation.

Administrative Regulations

Defining Curriculum

Curriculum is defined broadly as the academic content taught in schools and within specific courses. Curriculum identifies the concepts, knowledge and skills students in a specific grade/academic discipline should know and be able to do as a result of their educational experience. A Manchester Public Schools curriculum document includes the national or state standards students will work toward, the units that teachers teach, the instructional pedagogy appropriate to the course or discipline, the learning materials used in the course, and various forms of assessment that provide evidence of student progress toward meeting course expectations. It is recommended that curriculums include Assured Learning Experiences (ALEs). The ALEs are common experiences that students engage in to demonstrate their progress in attaining the learning standards identified in the course.

The Role of Standards and Curriculum Frameworks

National and state standards inform the curriculum writing process. These standards are used as a foundation for MPS leaders to make decisions about what to include in an individual curriculum so that students can achieve the standards identified for a particular course or grade level. In addition to standards, curriculum frameworks are published by professional organizations representing the various academic disciplines and by the State Department of Education. Curriculum frameworks serve as an important influence for curriculum development as they provide a vision for the learner in each academic discipline as well as guidance on ways to implement standards through the use of highly effective pedagogical practices. Frameworks often provide a description of the standard at each grade level, or grade-level band, and snapshots of grade-level instructional practice. Curriculum frameworks also typically include suggestions for connections across and between courses and themes that can be used in instruction. Using standards and curriculum frameworks, curriculum writers have a wealth of information to guide the development of local curriculum documents that meet the needs of students.

Curriculum Design: Writing & Revision Process

The district's curriculum continually evolves to meet the needs of a changing society. The curriculum writing and/or revision process may initiate from a variety of sources including:

- (1) newly adopted state and/or national standards (as was the case with CT’s adoption of the Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and new PreK-12 social studies and arts standards)
- (2) the five-year curriculum review process from which needs for curriculum revision emerge,
- (3) requests for new or revised courses through the district’s course request process, or
- (4) the needs and interests of students and the community.

Key questions guide the curriculum writing process. These questions include, “what are the appropriate national or state standards for this course?”, “what are the concepts and understanding students should address in this course?”, “what are the most effective ways to structure learning experiences?”, and “what are the most effective ways to assess learning?”. The graphic below outlines this iterative process.

Five-Year Curriculum Review

The curriculum review process provides all PreK-12 departments with a consistent format and tools to review and assess curriculum on a regular basis. The entire PK - 12 program of all content area departments and related services programs are reviewed during the same year on a five-year cycle. The Curriculum Review process is based on five core indicators of effective curriculum design:

<p>Indicator 1: Content Skills and Understandings</p> <p>What students are expected to know, understand, and be able to do is clearly defined, meaningful, focused on fundamental and relevant knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a global community, and reflect high expectations for all.</p>
<p>Indicator 2: Maps, Units and Pacing Guide Development</p> <p>Written documents include key required components, including the scope or breadth of material, the sequence of material, and the method of instruction in order to provide an articulated curriculum across the grades.</p>
<p>Indicator 3: Assured Learning Experiences</p> <p>Key cognitive learning experiences (i.e., specific pedagogical strategies or instructional tasks) that help learners perceive, process, rehearse, store, and transfer new learning; tasks that create authentic experiences for all students to demonstrate proficiency with content and understandings specified; tasks that promote coherence and alignment across grades/courses and reflect high expectations for all students.</p>
<p>Indicator 4: Assessment and Data</p> <p>Measures of content knowledge, process skills, and understandings; the specified assessments provide a means to determine the level of student learning as delineated in the curriculum</p>

documents. Both formative and summative assessments are specified, aligned, and represent high expectations.

Indicator 5: Curriculum Alignment

Reflects a clear match between the written curriculum, taught curriculum, and tested curriculum (including local and state assessments) consistent with external and internal standards, assessments, and best practices, creating coherence within and across the grades.

Curriculum reviews are done on a five-year cycle. The first and most critical phase in the process is a self-assessment. A group representing PreK-12 educators work as a vertical team to complete an assessment of the district curriculum in a content area. The goal of the self-assessment is to provide an in-depth reflection of the status of curriculum. The self-assessment is framed by guiding questions for each of the five indicators named above. Following the self-assessment, a subset of the vertical team presents its findings to the district’s Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

The next phase of curriculum review is implementation. Based on the self-assessment and feedback of the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment vertical team leaders will prioritize areas of focus and define action steps within department and district development planning.

Following the curriculum review process, vertical teams address identified department priorities by developing and monitoring long-range plans for curriculum implementation. Action steps taken may include:

- Utilizing the self-assessment as well as feedback from the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment to develop and monitor short and long-term strategic actions for curriculum implementation.
- Making recommendations to address professional learning needs.
- Ensuring and articulating vertical alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (e.g., vocabulary, mathematical discourse) within each content area.
- Analyzing district-wide data to monitor outcomes and ensure effectiveness of curriculum implementation and professional learning.
- Soliciting feedback and respond to changes in a timely manner (e.g. new research, state mandates).
- Establishing ad hoc groups to address issues, challenges, or needs identified by the vertical team.

Each year, the Directors of Teaching and Learning shall submit end-of-year reports to the Deputy Superintendent summarizing their actions to implement and monitor curriculum and to support teachers’ professional learning. These reports, along with student performance data and feedback from the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment inform plans for the subsequent school year.

Data and Artifacts Collected, Analyzed or Examined

	Indicator 1	Indicator 2	Indicator 3	Indicator 4	Indicator 5
	Content Skills and Understandings	Maps, Units and Pacing Guide Development	Assured Learning Experiences	Assessment and Data	Curriculum Alignment
DATA					
ARTIFACTS					

Rubric - Evaluation of Instructional Program

Indicator 1: Content, Skills and Understandings: What students are expected to know, understand and be able to do is clearly defined, meaningful, culturally relevant and responsive, focused on fundamental and relevant knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a global community, and reflects high expectations for all students.

The district/school/department mission is effectively reflected in the selection of content and skills. There is clear and compelling evidence that state and/or national standards were used and/or prioritized to determine what students should know, understand and be able to do. A common language is articulated accurately and it reflects accepted practice within the discipline and/or current educational research and promotes the work of the discipline. Effective 21st century skills are integrated (embedded) throughout the curriculum in order to promote college and career readiness (flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility), including problem solving, communication (communicating clearly, collaborating with others), critical thinking (reasoning effectively, using systems, thinking, making judgments and decisions), and adaptability. The specified content, skills and understandings provide opportunities to have student learning extend beyond the curriculum.

What did the data and/or artifacts reveal? What did you conclude?

Based on your vertical team priorities and data analysis, what emerged as strengths and needs in this area?

How did the data inform the vertical team priorities?

What level of priority has been identified for this indicator (high, mid-level, low-level)?

Indicator 2: Maps, Units and Pacing Guides Development: The written documents per grade include key required components, including the scope or breadth of material (how much of what is to be taught/ should be taught at that particular level within that particular context) and the sequence (the succession of when the information is presented) and how (i.e., spiral, systematic, selective emphasis), providing an articulated curriculum across the grades.

Comprehensive curriculum maps, units and pacing guides that define common expectations by grade level and course have been developed across the discipline. Maps are used by teachers to guide and sequence instruction where key content knowledge and skills, assessments and assured instructional experiences are evident. The units of study, with priority standards and supporting standards that are aligned with and are “unwrapped,” are clearly identified. The units of study also detail the big ideas, essential questions, pre- and post-assessments, key vocabulary, interdisciplinary connections, 21st century learning skills, learning activities, and high-impact instructional strategies that address differentiation, enrichment and intervention (Ainsworth, 2010). The curriculum is balanced (i.e., appropriate amounts per grade, appropriate across the grades and increasingly rigorous—content is not over or under emphasized). A pacing guide is used by teachers for implementing the units of study to ensure all priority standards are taught, assessed, re-taught, and reassessed over the course of the school year (Ainsworth).

What did the data and/or artifacts reveal? What did you conclude?

Based on your vertical team priorities and data analysis, what emerged as strengths and needs in this area?

How did the data inform the vertical team priorities?

What level of priority has been identified for this indicator (high, mid-level, low-level)?

Indicator 3: Assured Learning Experiences: Key cognitive learning experiences (i.e., specific pedagogical strategies or instructional tasks) that help learners perceive, process, rehearse, store and transfer new learning or tasks that create authentic experiences for all students to demonstrate proficiency of the grade level content and understandings are specified. These tasks promote coherence and alignment across the grades/courses and reflect high expectations for all students.

The assured learning experiences are specified in the curriculum, including learning experiences that differentiate, bringing meaning to the content, standards and skills. Assured learning experiences employ best practices and reflect effective teaching strategies and standards for dynamic teaching that is student-centered, skillful, data-driven, engaging, reflective and collaborative, and personalized. Assured learning experiences are aligned with curriculum and assessments, reflect the standards and are highly engaging. Specified teaching strategies lead all students to understanding and promote high levels of performance.

What did the data and/or artifacts reveal? What did you conclude?

Based on your vertical team priorities and data analysis, what emerged as strengths and needs in this area?

How did the data inform the vertical team priorities?

What level of priority has been identified for this indicator (high, mid-level, low-level)?

Indicator 4: Assessment/Data: Given the need to measure content knowledge, process skills and understandings, the specified assessments provide the means to determine the level of student learning as delineated in the curriculum documents. Both formative and summative assessments are specified, aligned and represent high expectations.

Key assessments must be aligned with standards as well as be common across the school system. Assessment criteria are used to link/align assessments to standards. For common assessments, levels of performance are defined (e.g., proficiency, mastery) by stated criteria and exemplars are available to teachers. A range of assessments are represented (formative, interim, summative). Assessments should be varied in order to measure depth of knowledge, level of understanding and the ability to apply concepts in unique or practical settings. Finally, assessment data are collected, analyzed and used to assess student learning and inform Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment revisions.

What did the data and/or artifacts reveal? What did you conclude?

Based on your vertical team priorities and data analysis, what emerged as strengths and needs in this area?

How did the data inform the vertical team priorities?

What level of priority has been identified for this indicator (high, mid-level, low-level)?

Indicator 5: Curriculum Alignment: There is a clear match between the written curriculum, taught curriculum and tested curriculum (including local and state assessments) that is consistent with external and internal standards, assessments and best practices, creating coherence within and across the grades.

Curriculum alignment refers to the examination of the match between the written curriculum, taught curriculum and tested curriculum (including local assessment and state assessments). An aligned curriculum represents a curriculum that is consistent with external and internal standards, assessments and best practices. The curriculum is aligned between local learning expectations and state assessments, between local assessments and learning outcomes. Assessment is aligned with the written and taught curriculum.

What did the data and/or artifacts reveal? What did you conclude?

Based on your vertical team priorities and data analysis, what emerged as strengths and needs in this area?

How did the data inform the vertical team priorities?

What level of priority has been identified for this indicator (high, mid-level, low-level)?