Curriculum Review Plan

Purpose

The purpose of the Curriculum Review Plan is to support the mission of the City School District of Albany, including the belief that all individuals can learn and that high expectations drive high achievement. The Plan requires teams of teachers and administrators to examine current curriculum and student performance data, research and review materials and resources, design and implement instruction, and monitor results, including student and parent perceptual data, in a continuous cycle of revision and improvement. This process helps ensure that curriculum is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and that the curricular expectations for the school system and its schools are rigorous, relevant, and public. The end goal is to reach the students and to meet the district mission “for college and career, citizenship and life.”

Process

The Curriculum Review Plan of the City School District of Albany will follow a cycle as follows: a year of review, research, analysis and planning, followed by four years of implementation and monitoring. This curriculum review cycle provides an in-depth study of each curriculum area on a staggered basis, thus supporting a sustainable system. The five year cycle is to allow time for review, creation, revision, implementation and consistency. Embedded in the cycle is continual annual review that will allow for responsiveness to immediate needs of students and teachers, commitment to local school and district improvement goals, as well as Board of Education policy changes, and shifts in state, national and global trends.

Each review consists of five stages:

1. Year 1—Analysis/Plan: All curriculum documents used by staff are examined by the vertical team, including the scope and sequence, curriculum maps, common assessments, goals/learner outcomes, and essential questions. Reactions to the current curricula are collected from staff, parents and students. Vertical team members and staff potentially visit other schools, attend professional conferences, and collect current research about their subject area. The vertical team decides on those areas of the curricula, if any, that requires development or revision, creates a budget to accomplish the work and submits the recommendation to the Curriculum Coordinating Council.

2. Year 2—Development/Revision: Once a plan for development/revision is approved, ad hoc teams are created for the specific levels, for example, primary, intermediate, middle, and high school, as appropriate. The creating/revision process should commence in the summer months following year 1 to allow training in Rigorous Curriculum Design (RCD) and capitalize on summer curriculum development time. During this phase, the ad hoc teams may recommend resources to support the
curriculum. The textbook/resource adoption protocol (see attached) will be followed ending in a final recommendation to the Director of Curriculum, who submits that recommendation to the Superintendent and the Board of Education for final approval. A plan is constructed at the end of year 2 to support the implementation of the new curriculum, including professional development needs.

3. Year 3-5—Implementation/Monitoring: Ongoing monitoring of the program/curriculum and current trends in the discipline is a part of this phase. Minor changes to documents or assessments are made as necessary. Professional development offerings related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, continue to be provided. Data is continually collected for purposes of evaluation.

During the Analysis and Planning stage of a curriculum it is important that the following questions are considered:

Alignment – To what extent is the curriculum

- Aligned with Common Core Learning Standards or National and State Standards?
- Aligned with the Common Core Standards for Literacy?
- Aligned with Core Life Skills?
- Aligned vertically and horizontally?

Rigorous and Relevant – To what extent is the curriculum

- Comprehensive, with personalization, choice and quality, as well as inclusive of the arts?
- Infused with core life skills?
- Explicit with regard to student grouping and leveling?
- Differentiated to serve all students?
- Based on current research and best practices?

High Expectations for All – To what extent is the curriculum

- Written to facilitate student interests, strengths and abilities?
- Applicable to varied styles and approaches?
- Written to explicitly address diversity and narrow the achievement gap?

Dynamic Teaching – To what extent is the curriculum

- Written to promote student centered teaching?
- Written to lead students to construct meaning through the use of active learning strategies such as purposeful discourse and/or inquiry-based learning?
- Written to promote instruction that is data driven?

September 2014
• Explicit about the use of data to provide depth and breadth of understanding of student achievement at a particular point in time and over time?
• Written to develop independence and interdependence with the gradual release of responsibility to students?
• Written to encourage teaching that promotes engagement in and shared responsibility for the learning process and provide opportunities for students to initiate their own questions and inquiries?
• Written to identify instructional strategies, resources, and flexible grouping which provide opportunities for students to think critically, creatively, and solve problems?
• Written with strategic questions and opportunities that appropriately challenge students and actively engage them in exploring the content through strategies such as discourse and/or inquiry-based learning?
• Written to promote teaching that integrates learning activities that make real-world, career or global connections, and promote interdisciplinary connections whenever possible?
• Written to establish clear pathways to college and career?
• Written to promote reflective and collaborative teaching?

Assessment – To what extent is the curriculum

• Aligned with standardized tests such NYS 3-8 CCLS Math and ELA Assessments, NYS Regents Exams, Advanced Placement (AP) and ACT/SAT?
• Written to measure student progress?
• Written so that assessments are used to guide teaching and curriculum development?
• Aligned with the scientific research-based intervention process?
• Written so that a variety of assessments with different purposes are used to capture the complexity of student learning across the hierarchy of cognitive skills?
• Written so that a variety of formative and summative assessments that are aligned with the learning objectives and value the diversity of ways in which students learn are used?

What professional development needs arise from the writing or revising of curriculum, instructional practices, or assessments?

• Do teams need training in the Rigorous Curriculum Design process?
• Does the newly revised curriculum embed new instructional strategies i.e. student centered instructions, differentiated tier 1 instruction that require professional development for teachers? Administrators?
• Do teams need training in writing and scoring assessments associated with the curriculum?

Structure
September 2014
To support a model of continuous improvement, three levels of curriculum leadership are required: 1) District (Curriculum Coordinating Council), 2) PK-12 departmental or "vertical" teams, and 3) ad hoc teams.

Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC)

At the district level, it is imperative to examine curriculum, its implementation and professional development across a range of teacher and administrator experiences and levels. One component necessary for successful curriculum development is the establishment of an organizational structure that provides for coordination between content areas and grade levels and additionally ensures the involvement of those affected by the curriculum. The Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) is a key “think tank” within the office of Student Achievement Services. This committee provides district-wide coordination of curriculum, implementation and professional development. The Council includes school administrators, central office staff, faculty and curriculum specialists. This Council ensures that there are opportunities for integration of curriculum across subject areas, and that the district has a long range and systemic plan for curriculum renewal. The Council also monitors the development and implementation of the PK-12 subject areas’ standards across grades and subjects. It is a representative body with specific responsibility to formulate, recommend, review and make decisions about curriculum, instruction and assessment development within the guidelines of Board of Education policy. The Curriculum Coordinating Council meets three times during the school year (September – June). The Director of Curriculum and Instruction chairs the CCC.

September 2014
Responsibilities of the Curriculum Coordinating Council are to:

- Follow the curriculum review cycle and set yearly goals for subject area vertical teams.
- Examine curriculum review data and plans provided by the vertical teams and provide feedback for curriculum areas under review.
- Share information with respective faculty and staff regarding the work of the council; serve as an information conduit regarding the committee’s efforts.
- Develop targeted professional development supporting all new or in progress curriculum initiatives, including training in curriculum writing, new curricula, new instructional models, and new assessments.

Membership guidelines for the Curriculum Coordinating Council include the following:

- Central Office administrators
- Elementary and secondary school principal
- Elementary and secondary school teacher
- Special education teacher
- Instructional Supervisors

Responsibilities of members:

- Report to faculty and solicit input as appropriate
- Participate fully in curriculum discussions, reviews, planning sessions
- Review and provide input on the vertical team reports
- Attend up to three meetings per year
- Review research and discuss best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction establishes the agenda for each of the CCC meetings. A summary of the work of the team is distributed to faculty and administration following each meeting.

Subject Area Vertical Teams

To ensure an aligned and coherent curriculum, examining the pathways that students experience both within and across the grades, is paramount. To this end, the City School District of Albany has a formal process to guarantee that the curriculum of the schools undergoes a systematic and thorough review across the grades. The structure to support this discipline-based review is “vertical teams.” Subject Area Vertical Teams are PK-12 teams designed to accomplish district-wide curriculum coordination and articulation. They are structured to ensure that all schools and levels and key leadership roles are represented and that teachers and administrators alike have a role in making curriculum decisions for their various disciplines. Each team includes administrators, reading and mathematics specialists (as September 2014
appropriate), teacher representatives from across a range of schools, and is chaired by the curriculum specialist (Supervisor, Chair, BCTL). The team in each discipline also serves to ensure that changes and modifications are made in a timely way and in response to immediate internal or external changes. For example, the team may need to respond to new standards/information in the field, consider new research, respond to state/federal mandates, or examine the impact of changes in Board of Education policies/goals.

The teams engage in the following work:

- **Analysis of data in curriculum implementation:** The team’s primary function is to analyze the effectiveness of the implementation of the curriculum in order to recommend changes, modifications or additions to the curriculum. Vertical discussions should begin with an examination of the data regarding the outcomes of the implementation of the curriculum. This may include standardized test scores, local grades, achievement on common assessments, perceptual data or other indicators as defined by the team. Student achievement relative to the implemented curriculum serves as a key source for guiding the work of curriculum revision. Data are used to evaluate the curriculum to ensure that it is rigorous and relevant. At the start of the school year, teams articulate a preliminary assessment of the “state of the state” for their disciplines.

- **Analysis of issues in curriculum implementation:** Another key function is to analyze the effectiveness of the implementation of the curriculum relative to the questions outlined above. The teams identify key issues and needs across the grade levels, based on these established indicators of rigorous and relevant curriculum. The teams prioritize uses and then work to determine whether action needs to be taken or projects initiated. The teams may recommend that ad hoc work groups be established to accomplish particular tasks. These actions become part of the departmental development plan. Teams regularly analyze the content, work on better aligning standards, curriculum and assessment, and assess the implementation. The teams also engage in problem solving to address critical needs and issues in their disciplines across grade levels and schools.

- **Identify and develop long range plans for curriculum implementation:** Vertical Teams evaluate the standards, examine curriculum alignment issues, balance the standards across grades and levels, suggest revisions to curriculum documents, identify the need for writing new curriculum, and identify needed professional development based on changes to curricula. The chair will task Subject Area/Grade Level Ad Hoc committees with the work identified in the Vertical Team’s evaluation. Identified long range needs form the foundation of programmatic goals and action steps to better strengthen the program and/or provide support and professional development to teachers in the
implementation of the curriculum. Each year, in the fall, the vertical team documents and analyzes the progress on each long-range goal. This analysis is then used to guide the vertical team work and shape the future departmental goals and action steps for the coming year. Every year, the vertical team reports to the CCC the progress made on the long-range goals, sharing what was, what is and what will be. Additionally, they report on what extent the curriculum is rigorous and relevant, supports high expectations for all learners, and supports dynamic teaching. Finally, professional development should be planned to support all new curriculum implementation, including new instructional priorities/strategies and assessments.

Responsibilities of the Vertical Teams are to:

- Examine and review curriculum data relative to the established criteria; rate and assess the level of development
- Establish short and long-term goals, including recommendations for curriculum writing/revisions
- Recommend the establishment of ad hoc work groups to address specific issues/needs and for curriculum writing
- Monitor outcomes related to the recommended improvement efforts
- Report to the CCC progress toward the established criteria
- Contribute to the development of departmental goals related to curriculum improvement
- Assist in the effort to improve effective communication across the schools related to curriculum and professional development; assist in the collection of relevant data as appropriate
- Share or solicit information with respective faculty and staff regarding the work of the vertical team; serve as an information conduit regarding the committee’s efforts
- Advise Curriculum Coordinating Council on professional development needs based on work completed

Membership guidelines for the Vertical Teams include the following standing members:

- Instructional Supervisors, if appropriate, content Chair, and/or BCTL
- Building administrators
- Elementary teachers (3 – representing range of grades), middle school teachers (3 or 1 from each school) and high school teachers (3 across grades) responsible for teaching the discipline, SPED and ESL teacher (1 each, can be included in the numbers above)

Responsibilities of members:

- Report to faculty and solicit input as appropriate

September 2014
- Participate fully in the expectations of a vertical team as described above
- Contribute grade level work samples, as necessary to contribute to any aspect of the review
- Attend four to six meetings per year, dependent upon place in the cycle
- Review research and discuss best practices in curriculum, instruction and assessment

The curriculum specialists will establish the agenda for each of the vertical team meetings. A copy of the minutes of each meeting is sent to the Director of Teaching and Learning.

**Ad Hoc Groups**

Ad hoc work groups are established to address the issues, challenges or needs as identified by the vertical team that require prompt attention. This enables the appropriate and key individuals to be involved. Ad hoc work groups may have short agendas, such as developing a particular grade level assessment, or may require longer term action, such as an in depth analysis of a particular portion of a program and writing/revising of curriculum documents. The purpose is to have a clear focus for the work group to accomplish a specific identified task within a defined period of time. Ad hoc work groups also allow for broader teacher participation by targeting individuals who are closest to the work depending upon the nature of the issue at hand.

**Responsibilities of the Ad Hoc teams are to:**

- Fulfill mandate from Vertical Team, e.g. curriculum writing, assessment writing, data analysis, etc.
- Ensure work conforms to CSDA guidelines for curriculum, instruction, and assessment (RCD)
- Ensure curriculum writing conforms to the Rigorous Curriculum Design (RCD) model
- Advise Vertical Teams on necessary professional development associated with work completed

**Membership guidelines for the Ad Hoc Teams include the following members:**

- Any member of the Vertical Team
- Curriculum specialist, such as an Instructional Supervisor, Chair, BCTL, or Coach
- Subject area faculty, cross level when appropriate
- Library media specialist, when appropriate
- Special education faculty, when appropriate

September 2014
• ESL teacher, when appropriate

Responsibilities of members:

• Attend all meetings
• Complete necessary work outside of meeting times
• Report to faculty and solicit input as appropriate
• Participate fully in curriculum discussions, reviews, planning sessions
• Review and provide input on the ad hoc team reports
• Review research and discuss best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment
• Term of service for ad hoc committee members is finite; membership ceases as the work is completed