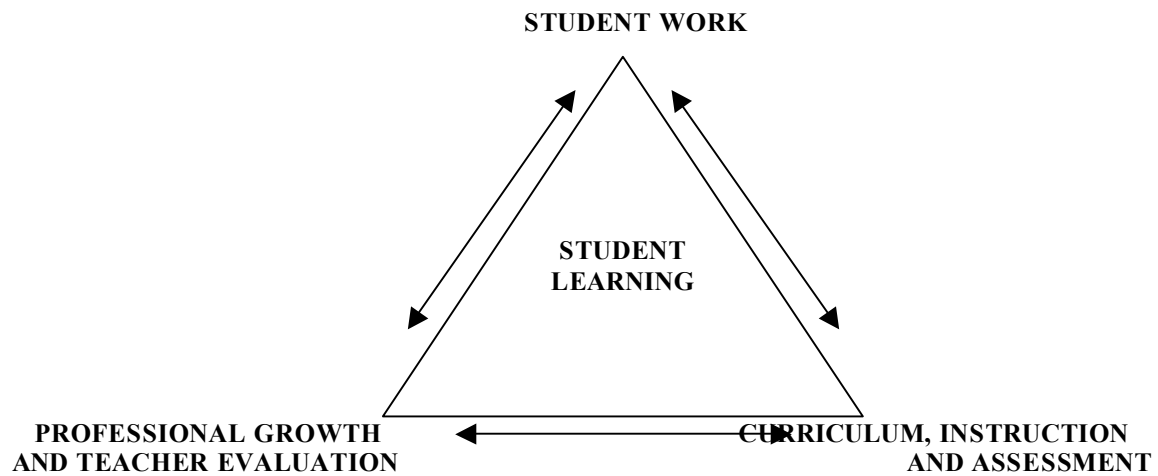


**Lebanon Public Schools**

**Guide to Curriculum Development:  
Purposes, Practice, Procedures**



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# LEBANON PUBLIC SCHOOLS MISSION STATEMENTS

## **DISTRICT**

The mission of the Lebanon Public Schools, as a provider of comprehensive academic opportunities, is to prepare students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in an evolving world. To this end, the schools commit to active learning environments that promote personal competence and social responsibility.

## **LYMAN MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL**

Lyman Memorial High School recognizes the unique academic, social, and personal strengths of each of its student. Our ultimate goal is to facilitate the development of academic capabilities, social awareness, and the sense of civic responsibility necessary to lead fulfilled and productive lives. The school community, mindful of individual differences, strives to teach its students the skills needed to become life-long, independent learners and responsible members of a global society.

## **LEBANON MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Lebanon Middle School is committed to instilling a love of learning, an appreciation of self, a respect for others, and responsible attitude toward society and the environment. This commitment requires a supportive community of students, parents and staff to foster successful learning experiences responsive to the needs of young adolescents.

## **LEBANON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Lebanon Elementary School will:

- Encourage and stimulate maximum student academic achievement based on individual potential, while recognizing and nurturing special talents in all students;
- Provide a supportive, caring classroom environment where students develop self-esteem, self-motivation, and an understanding of their role in the learning process;
- Engage students in the critical thinking process that will teach them how to find and use information to become life-long independent learners;
- Develop the physical, mental, emotional, and social capabilities that will enable children to assume their role in a changing society; and
- Prepare students to become responsible citizens with the skills needed to take their place as productive members in a multicultural world.

## INTRODUCTION

Curriculum provides an important and valued leadership opportunity and service. We look to knowledgeable and skilled faculty to design curriculum that provides high quality learning experiences for students and supports our collective goals and aspirations for student achievement.

The process of designing curriculum by mapping backwards from standards to assessments and finally to the design of learning experiences represents a significant shift from the traditional model of curriculum development. The curriculum development process is also designed to be recursive: a document is developed, used, refined and improved based on performance data arising from an analysis of student work and feed back from faculty and students. In this way, curriculum documents are almost always a “work in progress.” The written curriculum will be revised on an ongoing basis as a result of faculty, student, and parent feedback.

Curriculum writing is also an outstanding professional development opportunity. Whenever possible, curriculum development should be a collaborative activity that provides an arena in which faculty can examine issues related to academic content, pedagogy and student performance.

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August 2003

The purpose of this guide is to provide instructions to staff as they begin to develop or revise their curriculum guides. This document provides an overview of the Lebanon Public Schools' curriculum development process and provides a series of steps to follow in creating curriculum documents. This guide is based on the Connecticut State Department of Education's Guide to Curriculum Development

## Overview

A Lebanon Public School curriculum guide is a structured document that delineates the philosophy, goals, objectives, student competencies, learning experiences, instructional strategies, resources and assessments that comprise a specific educational program. Additionally, it represents an articulation of what Lebanon Public Schools students should know and be able to do and supports teachers in knowing how to achieve these goals.

Accordingly, an exemplary guide is a tool that assists in planning and implementing a high quality instructional program. It:

- establishes a clear philosophy and set of overarching goals that guide the entire program and the decisions that affect each aspect of the program;
- establishes sequences both within and between levels and assures a coherent and articulated progression from grade to grade;
- establishes grade-level and/or course specific student performance standards
- outlines a basic framework for what to do, how to do it, when to do it and how to know if it has been achieved;
- allows for flexibility and encourages experimentation and innovation within an overall structure;
- promotes interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of curricula when appropriate;
- suggests methods of assessing the achievement of the program's goals and objectives;
- provides a means for its own ongoing revision and improvement; and
- provides direction for procurement of human, material and fiscal resources to implement the program.

The formulation of a district curriculum guide should not be viewed as the culmination of the curriculum development process, but rather as an essential step in the process of ongoing curriculum development and implementation. Thus, no guide will be perfect. No guide will ever be a finished product cast in stone. No guide will be free from criticism. However, to be effective, a guide must earn acceptance by Lebanon teachers and must be deemed educationally

valid by Lebanon parents and the Lebanon community at large. This acceptance will be far easier to attain when the curriculum guide is:

- consistent with what is known about child growth and development;
- compatible with the general philosophy of the school system;
- based upon clear convictions about teaching and learning;
- representative of instructional strategies and activities to meet the needs of students with varying abilities and needs;
- articulated from kindergarten through grade 12;
- easy to use by all Lebanon educators;
- filled with samples, examples, and suggested resources;
- developed collaboratively by a broadly-based committee of teachers and other interested stakeholders; and
- linked to Lebanon teacher evaluation goals and professional development.

## **The Lebanon Curriculum Development Process**

The development of an effective curriculum guide is a multi-step, ongoing and cyclical process. The process progresses from evaluating the existing program, to designing an improved program, to implementing a new program and back to evaluating the revised program.

Lebanon Public Schools carries out this process in a planned and systematic manner that includes the eleven components outlined below.

### **A. Planning**

- 1. Convening a Curriculum Development Committee.** Such a committee, consisting primarily of teachers who represent the various schools and grade levels in a district, administrators, members of the public and perhaps students, becomes the driving force for curriculum change and the long-term process of implementing the curriculum. It is critical that an effective, knowledgeable and respected chairperson lead such a committee and it includes knowledgeable and committed members who gradually become the district's de facto “experts” during the development phases of the process as well as the implementation phases.
- 2. Identifying Key Issues and Research in the Specific Content Area.** The first step in any curriculum development process involves research that reviews recent issues and trends of the discipline, both within the district and across the nation. This research allows a curriculum committee to identify key issues and trends that

will support the needs assessment that should be conducted and the philosophy that should be developed.

3. **Assessing Need and Issues.** Curriculum development should be viewed as a process by which meeting student needs leads to improvement of student learning. Regardless of the theory or model followed, curriculum developers should gather as much information as possible. This information should include the desired outcomes or expectations of a high quality program, the role of assessment, the current status of student achievement and actual program content. The information should also consider the concerns and attitudes of teachers, administrators, parents and students. The data should include samples of assessments, lessons from teachers, assignments, scores on state standardized tests, textbooks currently used, student perception and feedback from parents.

The data collected from the needs assessment in conjunction with information obtained from research and various resources become the basis upon which the entire written curriculum - from philosophy to goals to assessment – is then built.

## **B. Articulating and Developing**

4. **Articulating a K-12 Program Philosophy.** These fundamental questions guide the overarching philosophy of the program.
  - ✧ *"Why learn (specific discipline)?"*
  - ✧ *"Upon what guiding principles is our program built?"*
  - ✧ *"What are our core beliefs about teaching and learning in (specific discipline)?"*
  - ✧ *"What are the essential questions?"*
  - ✧ *"How will we use assessment to improve the program and student learning?"*

As such, the program philosophy provides a unifying framework that justifies and gives direction to discipline based instruction.

After having studied curriculum research and assessed the current program, curriculum developers should be ready to construct a draft philosophy guiding the K-12 program. Such a philosophy or set of beliefs should be more than just "what we think should be happening," but rather "what our curriculum is actually striving to reflect."

**5. Defining K-12 Program, Grade-Level and Course Goals.** The purpose of the K-12 program philosophy is to describe the fundamental beliefs and inform the process of instruction. The curriculum guide delineates K-12 program goals as well as grade-level and course goals that address the key cognitive and affective content expectations for the program. An effective set of program goals has the following characteristics:

- Each goal is broadly conceived, to provide for continuous growth K-12 and into adult life.
- Each goal grows logically out of the philosophy of the specific discipline and the linkage is clear.
- Each goal grows out of a district goal and the linkage is clear.
- The goals are comprehensive enough to provide the basis for a quality K-12 program for all learners at all places on the learning continuum.
- The goals include each of the outcomes suggested by the philosophy.
- Each goal is realistic.
- There is a manageable number of goals (usually between 4-8).
- Each goal lends itself to developing objectives and/or student competencies.

**6. Developing and Sequencing of Grade-Level and Course Objectives/Competencies.** If the philosophy and goals of a curriculum represent the guiding principles of the curriculum, then the grade-level and course objectives/competencies represent the core of the curriculum. The specific grade-level and course objectives/competencies include clear expectations for what each learner is expected to know and be able to do and how it will be measured.

The committee should consider several key questions to identify, select, write and sequence objectives/competencies

- Is the objective/competency measurable and how will it be measured?
- Is the objective/competency sufficiently specific to give the reader a clear understanding of what the student should be able to do, without being so detailed as to make the statement labored or the objective trivial?
- Is the objective/competency with the goals and philosophy of the program and the real and emerging needs of students?
- Is the objective/competency and attainable by students?
- Are appropriate materials and other resources available to make the objective/competency?

As objectives/competencies are developed and written, they should be organized in an orderly fashion. This order can be achieved in numerous ways: by grade, by strands, in units, in sequential levels of instruction, through essential questions or through some combination of these. Decisions about the organization of a curriculum guide should be made carefully and reflect the overarching philosophy of the program and the preferences of the teachers who are to use the guide.

- A *graded* structure organizes objectives/competencies by the grade in which a student is enrolled and is the most commonly used structure.
- An organization by *units* groups objectives/competencies by main topics. Units may or may not be of differing difficulty and may be large or small, sequential or non sequential. A unit organization is most commonly used for middle or high school courses.
- A *strand* organization places all of the objectives/competencies for a specific topic or strand together in a sequential order, without regard to specific grade. Such an organization lends itself to individual instruction and continuous progress within a strand.
- A *sequential* organization outlines objectives/competencies in a continuous chain without regard for grade level or strand, and allows for individual student progress along a continuum of skills and experiences.
- An organization by *big ideas* or *essential questions* centers the curriculum on enduring understandings. This method develops assessments and determines criteria of acceptable performance related to the essential questions.

Often, an effective guide will incorporate more than one format. For example, a common arrangement lists objectives/competencies grouped by strand within each grade level. In this manner the third grade teacher is provided with a complete listing of the third grade objectives/competencies organized by strand or major topic. However, it is important for this teacher to have access to the second grade objectives/competencies containing skills that may have been introduced, but not taught for mastery, as well as forthcoming fourth grade objectives. This information is often provided in a scope and sequence listing by strand that would place a specific third grade objective/competency, for example, in the context of the entire K-12 strand. Thus, one of the most important roles of grade-level and course objectives/competencies is assuring smooth transitions and curricular coordination among levels, particularly between elementary schools and middle schools, and between middle schools and high schools.

In addition to the delineation and sequencing of content through objectives/competencies, many curriculum guides provide additional information to

help teachers more effectively implement the curriculum. For example, some curriculum guides:

- provide an example of what is meant by each objective/competency;
- suggest instructional techniques and strategies for teaching specific objectives/competencies;
- suggest appropriate instructional materials that support instruction of specific objectives;
- provide examples of how to differentiate instruction and modify curriculum materials to meet the needs of high performing and/or highly interested students;
- provide information on how the objectives/competencies can be evaluated; and
- suggest interdisciplinary links, such as literature connections.

- 7. Identifying Resource Materials to Assist with Program Implementation.** An effective curriculum guide goes beyond a listing of objectives/competencies and identifies suggested instructional strategies and resources to help answer the question, "What instructional methods and materials are available to help me meet a particular objective or set of objectives?" As teachers and programs employ a broad range of materials, instructional modules for particular units, the Internet, computer software and the like, it is increasingly important that the curriculum guide includes teacher comments and the guide suggests and links available resources to curriculum objectives/competencies.
- 8. Developing and/or Identifying Assessment Items and Instruments to Measure Student Performance.** In many cases, a set of grade-level criterion-referenced tests, performance based tasks and course final examinations that answer concretely the question, "How will I know that my students know and are able to do what is expected of them?" holds an entire curriculum together. This piece of the curriculum development process helps to focus instruction and ensures the often elusive, but critical, alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment. Essentially the assessment piece of a curriculum is what drives curriculum. The assessments measure not only student progress, but also the effectiveness of the goals and objectives/competencies of the curriculum in meeting student needs.

Common grade-level, course criterion-referenced assessments and performance-based assessments should be created along with the curriculum and become part of the curriculum guide itself. The assessments should include clear performance expectations and a rubric that clearly defines the expectations for students and teachers alike. They help to clarify exactly what the grade or course objectives mean and provide a common standard for evaluating how successfully they are achieved.

- 9. Board of Education Presentation and Approval.** Before implementation a draft curriculum publication is presented to the Board of Education Curriculum Sub-Committee by the Director of Curriculum and several members of the curriculum committee. After a review period of 2-3 weeks the sub-committee may ask the committee to present to the total Board before approval. Committees should expect this process to take anywhere from 2-6 weeks if revisions are required.

## C. Implementing

- 10. Putting the New Program into Practice.** Too often, traditional practice entails sending a committee away for several after-school meetings and two weeks of summer writing as prelude to a back-to-school unveiling and distribution of the updated or revised curriculum. The process envisioned here entails a much more in-depth and systematic approach to both development and implementation. Instead of assuming that the process ends with the publication of a new guide, an effective curriculum committee continues to oversee the implementation, updating and evaluation of the curriculum.

It is important to remember that any innovation introduced into a system - including a new curriculum – requires time and support to be fully implemented. First, teachers need time and opportunities to become **aware** of the new curriculum and its overall design, particularly how it differs from the past. Then teachers need time and opportunities to become **familiar** with the new curriculum - often school or grade level sessions that focus on those specific parts of the curriculum for which individuals are responsible. Next, teachers need at least a year to **pilot** the new curriculum and new materials in their classrooms. It is not unusual for this period to take up to two years before the new curriculum is fully **implemented** and comfortably integrated into day-to-day practice. It is critical that the curriculum development committee, resource teachers and principals are aware of this process and are available to nurture it.

## D. Evaluating

- 11. Updating the New Program.** In this age of word processing and loose-leaf bound curriculum guides, it is easier than ever to update the guides and keep them as living, changing documents. One of the most common methods of periodically updating a curriculum guide is through grade-level meetings designed to share materials, activities, units, assessments and even student work that support the achievement of the curriculum goals that were unknown or unavailable when the guide was first developed. These approaches are invaluable professional development opportunities wherein teachers assume ownership of the curriculum they are responsible for implementing. In this way, the guide becomes a growing resource for more effective program implementation. Resource teachers are particularly effective vehicles for the preparation and distribution of these updates.
- 12. Determining the Success of the New Program.** The curriculum development cycle ends and then begins again with a careful evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the program. Using surveys, focused discussions and meetings like those

described in section 3, a curriculum development committee needs to periodically gather data on perceptions of program strengths, weaknesses, needs, preferences for textbooks and other materials, and topics or objectives that do not seem to be working effectively. This information should be gathered from data that represents overall student performance that is linked closely to daily instruction. Teams of teachers responsible for the specific discipline could accomplish this by sharing samples of assessments, performance tasks, student work, lessons and instructional practices related to the curricula.

The data from these surveys and meetings must then be combined with a careful analysis of more numerical data on the program such as:

- ongoing grade-level and course criterion-referenced exam data;
- teacher developed assessments, performance assessments, student portfolios;
- CMT results (overall, over time, by objective, and by subgroups);
- CAPT results (overall, over time, by objective, and by subgroups);
- course enrollments (particularly by level in middle and high schools); and
- SAT and AP results.

This detailed review and analysis of quantitative and qualitative information on the program's impact and on people's perceptions of its strengths and weaknesses forms the foundation for the next round of curriculum development and improvement.

## CURRICULUM GUIDE FORMAT

All curriculum design and development work will include:

1. Cover Page with date of acceptance by Board of Education
2. Committee Members
3. Table of Contents
4. Philosophy
5. Beliefs and Protocols \*
6. Goals
7. Description of Subject Learning Environment
  - General
  - Grade-level
  - Course level
8. Standards
  - Essential Understandings \*
  - Scope and Sequence of Objectives/ Competencies
  - Grade-level Objectives/Competencies, Teaching/.Grouping Strategy and Assessment Methods
9. Assessment
  - End-of-Year Performance Standards and Assessments
  - Grade-level and periodic Assessment Calendar
  - Sample Rubrics
10. Materials and Resources
11. School to Career Connection
12. Information Technology Connection
13. Subject Area Standards

## CURRICULUM DOCUMENTATION

Information materials that document the curriculum will be maintained in digital content such as text, forms, tables, diagrams, graphics, images, audio, and video. Content items will be stored and managed in a reliable server repository that saves each successive version and a traceable history of changes as material is authored, corrected or revised, and updated. The content items will be assembled and published in presentations that suit the various needs of teachers, students, administrators, parents, and the Board of Education. Multiple presentation modes will be supported, including hard copy print-on-demand, email attachments, Adobe PDF, Microsoft Office documents, and online web pages. The online documents will be cataloged, indexed, and cross-referenced to facilitate user searching and retrieval for access to both summary and detailed curriculum documentation as well as for incorporation of curriculum information into personalized teaching/learning material with annotations, ad hoc reports, and studies.

\* = optional

## SAMPLE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

Lebanon Public Schools began a new curriculum development cycle in the fall of 2001. This multi-year process, organized by a master schedule, allows for systematic research, evaluation, revision, implementation and refinement of over 15 major instructional programs in Lebanon Public Schools.

Each instructional program is scheduled on a five-year program review cycle, allowing for a balanced introduction of new materials to students and staff as well as long-range budgetary planning and funding. The five-year cycle is defined as follows:

- YEAR 1:      **REVIEW AND ANALYSIS:** Research, review and evaluate existing curriculum; revise and rewrite as needed or as time permits
  
- YEAR 2:      **PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:** Revise and rewrite goals, objectives and courses. Preview or purchase of instructional materials, field test materials, and curriculum. Presentation to Board of Education Curriculum Sub-Committee.
  
- YEAR 3:      **IMPLEMENTATION:** Implement new curriculum and materials; gather feedback
  
- YEAR 4:      **PRACTICE AND DOCUMENTATION:** Refine and modify
  
- YEAR 5:      **EVALUATION:** Refine and modify; prepare for evaluation year

In some program areas, Years 1 and 2 may be combined, depending on the amount of writing and revisions that must be done. In all cases, most of the evaluation and revision work is done at the beginning of the cycle, with three years of implementation.

All district curriculum development will be the work of Curriculum Committees composed of teachers, an administrator, and the K-12 curriculum director. Many committees will include the high school department head. The committees will primarily engage in their work during professional development days, release-time during the school year and paid summer curriculum work.

## **YEAR 1**

In Year 1, the **Review and Analysis** year, the following steps could be included:

- Conduct an assessment of the district's needs regarding content, strategies, and evaluation by surveying students, teachers, parents, and administrators;
- Assess students' learning needs in each subject area by consulting data for the district such as results of standardized and locally developed tests, report cards, portfolios, and other evidence of students' achievements;
- Conduct an assessment of resources available in the district needed for curriculum development and implementation in each subject area;
- Review District Curriculum Maps;
- Review the federal and state regulations with which the curricula must comply;
- Establish a priority list of curriculum needs and specify a time line for curriculum development in the subject area;
- Review current research in the field and recommendations of professional organizations;
- Summarize strengths and weaknesses of current program;
- Order sample materials from two or three publishers whose materials most closely match district goals and objectives

At the end of Year 1, the following documents should be produced:

- Philosophy, mission, goal statements, relation to district initiatives for program area
- Written recommendations as to where existing curriculum is weak
- Evaluation of program area courses at the high school, which should be kept/eliminated (How does each course support program and district objectives?)
- Content description for those grade levels under review
- Performance objectives written or compiled from existing documents for those grade levels under review (in matrix form)
- Written evaluations of two to three textbooks designed for teachers to use as evaluation guides during the following school year whenever a materials adoption is needed.

## **YEAR 2**

In Year 2, **Program Development**, the same participants, along with other teachers, may rewrite or develop performance objectives and necessary alignment documents to show correspondence with state objectives, testing, measurement methods, and instructional strategies and materials.

During the first semester of Year 2, recommended materials are circulated and introduced to building teachers by committee members; feedback is gathered and tabulated. When this phase is complete, a recommendation for new textbooks and materials is made, through the superintendent's office, to the board of education. These recommendations are submitted to the board in one of the adoption months, according to board of education policy. In addition, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction will present a draft to the Board of Education Curriculum Sub-Committee.

## **YEAR 3**

In Year 3, **Implementation Year**, in-service is conducted to ensure that the staff understands the changes and can translate them into actual classroom practice at all levels throughout the district. Feed back is gathered from teachers to evaluate new materials. Instructional strategies may be developed that support implementation.

## **YEARS 4 AND 5**

Years 4 and 5, **Refinement, Documentation and Evaluation**, include the continuing development of appropriate instructional strategies and activities. At the end of Year 5, teacher or parent surveys or other data collection methods may be begun in preparation for the Evaluation Year.

## **Yearly Budget Support for Curriculum Textbooks and Materials**

In anticipation of curriculum cycle expenditures Lebanon Public Schools' yearly budget will contain a fixed amount per pupil in each school's 640 textbook account that will be used to purchase newly reviewed and approved textbooks and materials to support curriculum implementation