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Guiding Questions for Curriculum Development & Implementation Planning

As discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, planning for the process of developing a curriculum framework is essential to both the short-term and long-term success of a new model for curriculum and assessment. Resistance to change and the frustration that often accompanies poorly implemented programs can quickly stall the momentum of a project that is needed to address achievement, equity, or other deficiencies that initially led to its ideation.

While no list of guiding questions can be exhaustive–the unique characteristics of a district will surely create new ones during planning and development–we have had great success in beginning the process with districts across the country using the guiding questions here. They are organized generally by the domains of the Knoster Model for change management that frames Chapter 2.



Purpose: *Removing Confusion*

Which 2 or 3 specific components of the district's strategic plan or other long-term goals will this new curriculum framework explicitly support?

- *Which student performance indicators are we targeting for improvement through this curriculum framework development?*
- *What are related elements that can be connected from the school-level improvement plans?*

How does the curriculum framework directly address academic equity gaps highlighted by district data?

- *What underlies the inequitable experiences of instruction for our students, and in what areas does the new curriculum help us address these?*

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- *How will the new curriculum framework ensure access to rigorous, grade-level content for English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities, and student performing below grade level?*

What core instructional values and student experiences should we expect to see in every classroom?

- *What does "high-quality instruction" look like operationally in our district, and how is it reflected in the framework?*
- *What autonomy do individual schools and teachers have to tailor the curriculum, and where does the curriculum remain strict?*

What existing instructional practices, materials, or programs must we discontinue because they no longer align with the new curriculum framework or must we incorporate into the new curriculum framework?

- *How do we connect textbooks, technology resources, or even one-off software implementations to the new curriculum framework?*
- *How do we disconnect textbooks, technology resources, or even one-off software implementations from instruction when they do not align with the new curriculum framework?*



Professional Learning: *Avoiding Anxiety*

What specific teaching skills and content knowledge do educators need to be empowered to instruct against this new framework?

- *Does the new curriculum framework require specialized pedagogical shifts (e.g., building-level vertical math modeling, science phenomenon-based learning) in which our teachers need to receive training?*

- *How do content knowledge assumptions affect the differences in professional development needed for elementary generalists vs. secondary specialists (or out-of-content teachers)?*

How does our current model of professional learning match the needs of professional learning for the new curriculum framework?

- *What professional learning protocols need to be developed or modified to train and provide professional learning?*
- *What elements of the new framework need next-, near-, short-, and long-term professional development and training? How do we triage the required professional learning and training?*

How do we differentiate professional learning for new teachers, veteran teachers, and building administrators?

- *What specific training and professional learning do principals and other leaders need so they can lead the implementation with confidence and fidelity?*
- *How will we incorporate this into our new-teacher induction program and in-service training models?*

What resources and time structures are required to allow teachers to review, interact with, and plan with the new curriculum units before teaching them?

- *When during the contractual school day or calendar year will teachers be given independent and small group time to learn and plan with the new framework?*
- *What planning templates or digital platforms will we provide to streamline teachers' lesson-prep time, and what are the expectations for lesson plans in the new framework?*

How will we train school leaders to provide actionable, growth-oriented feedback specifically tied to this framework?

- *How will we calibrate observations among administrators to ensure a "proficient" implementation looks the same across all buildings?*

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- *What coaching practices or feedback protocols can leaders use to shift teacher practice forward without creating defensiveness?*



Incentives: *Diminishing Resistance*

What connections to the new curriculum framework will resonate most with teachers?

- *How do we create visible relationships between the strategic goals and the outcomes of implementing a new framework?*
- *What incremental changes can we support teachers to make to help to reach the goal?*

What structural barriers or administrative burdens can we remove to provide a better environment for teachers to adopt this new framework?

- *Can we pause or eliminate other district initiatives, committees, or redundant data-tracking requirements during the first year of rollout?*

In what ways will teachers recognize autonomy and creative flexibility within the framework?

- *How will we encourage teacher innovation while maintaining a guaranteed and viable curriculum for all students?*

How will we connect this curriculum framework to teachers' intrinsic motivation—the desire to see all of their students succeed?

- *How can we highlight early student engagement data or student work samples to prove to teachers that their hard work is paying off?*
- *How do we ground our implementation in student stories rather than policy mandates?*

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Resources: *Avoiding Frustration*

How will we systematically look for, celebrate, and amplify observations of success across the district?

- *How will principals or coaches capture and share quick videos or artifacts of teachers finding success with the new framework?*
- *How can we use peer-led learning walks to let teachers see the curriculum working successfully in a colleague's classroom?*

How will we onboard new teachers and support current teachers and administrators to prevent gaps in expectations of implementation?

- *Where will our curriculum framework, unit plans, and training videos be permanently housed digitally so they are easily accessible to all faculty and staff?*
- *Who will be explicitly responsible for updating the curriculum materials as the framework evolves?*
- *How will we structure professional learning around the new framework initially, and then how do we tailor it to the needs of specific groups long-term?*

What structures will we set up to collect regular, ongoing feedback from teachers and students about what is working and what needs refinement?

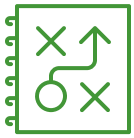
- *At what intervals (e.g., end of every quarter, end of every unit) will we gather user feedback on pacing, material quality, and student engagement?*
- *What is the formal mechanism for a teacher to submit a request for a curriculum review, correction, or improvement?*

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How will funding be aligned to ensure the curriculum framework project always has ongoing staffing and material resources?

- *What is our multi-year budget forecast for replacing consumable curriculum materials, software licenses, and ongoing training?*



Action Planning to Sustain Practice

Readiness & Audit — How will we assess our current curriculum, audit existing materials, and establish our initial needs?

- *What student achievement data or curriculum audit results justify the timeline and focus of this redesign?*

Design & Alignment — What is the timeline for drafting the framework, reviewing it with stakeholder groups, and moving toward adding materials and resources?

- *How will we explicitly map out the vertical progression of skills across the grade bands (3–5, 6–8, 9–12) to ensure no gaps exist?*
- *What rigorous evaluation tool (e.g., IMET or EQuIP rubric) will we use to evaluate the alignment of existing materials?*

Piloting & Feedback — Which schools or grade bands will begin to use the framework first, and how will we gather data to make shifts in development or next steps?

- *What are the criteria for beginning small-scale implementation while other components of a grade's framework is being developed?*

District-Wide Implementation — How will we stage the full implementation to avoid overwhelming staff?

- *Will we roll out by subject area (e.g., Math in Year 1, ELA in Year 2) or by grade bands (e.g., Elementary in Year 1, Secondary in Year 2), and why?*
- *How will we schedule the professional learning in a cadence that matches the needs of helping teachers to shift their practice in alignment with the new framework?*

Continuous Improvement — What is our annual review cycle to ensure the curriculum remains dynamic and updated?

- *What specific measures will we use to determine the success of implementation and student performance in response to the new framework?*
- *When will the teams review assessment data against our framework implementation metrics?*
- *How will we manage a dynamic model so that updates are made systematically rather than constantly disrupting teachers throughout the year?*

How will we clearly articulate the *"why"* of this change to teachers, families, and board members to move them from compliance to commitment?

- *What is our internal communications plan, and what specific media (videos, forums, infographics) will we use to share it?*
- *How will we explain this change to families in plain, jargon-free language?*

What specific rubrics or look-for protocols will principals use during walkthroughs to monitor implementation consistency across the district?

- *Sub-question:* What are 3 to 5 highly visible, objective pieces of evidence that a principal should see in a classroom during a 10-minute walkthrough?
- *Sub-question:* How will walkthrough data be aggregated at the district level to spot systemic implementation gaps?

How will we protect this framework from being derailed when there is a turnover in district leadership or school board members?

- *How will we embed this curriculum framework into policy so it cannot be easily overturned by a shifting political climate?*

- *How will we document and archive our "institutional knowledge" so a new superintendent or curriculum director can see the history and progression?*