

Curriculum Audit

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Administrator's Role in Curriculum Development, 2016

Purpose of the Curriculum Audit

The purpose of this curriculum audit is to gain a greater understanding of the influences that board policies, curriculum, assessments, budgets, decision-making and productivity have on the student learning within our building.



Our Audit Team

Team

Two Candidates: [REDACTED] Ali

School Principal

Five Survey Respondents

Survey sent to instructional staff using Google Forms in two parts

Our School

K-5 public elementary school in large urban district



Survey Results



Board Policies

Three Strengths

1. Sixty-percent of teachers have an understanding of board policies in regards to curriculum.
2. Sixty-percent of teachers agree that board policies are easily accessible to all school community members.
3. Eighty-percent of teachers agree that there is a comprehensive set of board policies that establish a framework for the curriculum.

One Challenge

A whole lot of “I Don’t Know” responses.



Research-Based Solution

Board Policies

Challenge: Twelve of the 13 questions had at least 1 or more respondents answer “I Don’t Know”

Solution: According to DuFour, DuFour and Eaker (2008), school districts and school buildings within that district should work collaboratively to establish similar visions founded upon the district vision without leaving the school building isolated.

According to our results, teachers do not feel involved in the board decisions and do not have a clear understanding of policies implemented from these decisions.

School-level staff should create/clarify their vision to align with district vision after school-level staff have been involved in creating district vision for shared understanding. This will help to create clear standard of work and clear action agenda for further decision-making (DuFour, DuFour and Eaker, 2008).

Administrators and Supervisors

Three Strengths

1. Principal knows how to monitor curriculum delivery.
2. Principal knows how to disaggregate data.
3. Teachers know how to modify curriculum.

One Challenge

Confusion between decision-makers and those who deliver instruction and assess student learning.



Research-Based Solution

Administrators and Supervisors

Challenge: Confusion between decision-makers and those who deliver instruction and assess student learning.

Additional information gleaned from conversations and anecdotal observations within our subject school building highlight that many teachers do not successfully use formative assessments to inform instruction.

Solution: Create formative assessment teams (including teachers, Intervention Specialist, Instructional Coach) to develop common assessments to avoid replicating effort among all staff members and to improve equitable access to learning objectives (DuFour, DuFour and Eaker, 2008).

The Curriculum

Three Strengths

1. Teachers follow the curriculum.
2. The curriculum is functional.
3. The curriculum provides consistency and continuity.

One Challenge

Families are not involved in creating the curriculum.



Research-Based Solution

The Curriculum

Challenge: Families are not involved in creating the curriculum.

Solution: Based on Marzano's work (2003), effective school-parent partnerships are characterized by three aspects: two-way communication between school and home, multiple opportunities for parent participation and volunteering, as well as offering opportunities for parents to have a voice in school decision-making.

Given that parental involvement in schools is traditionally limited to volunteering to chaperone dances, volunteering for fundraisers, helping students with homework and joining a parent association, we will slowly roll out a more inclusive parent-curriculum involvement policy.

Year 1: Send out quarterly newsletter with standards & topics to be covered; solicit ideas for learning extension lessons and seek volunteers to help with extension lessons

Year 2: Create a parent-curriculum focus group using survey respondents from previous year and recruitment by School-Family Liaison

Year 3: Once this becomes a cultural norm and parent expectation in year three, provide a curriculum & learning activity suggestion box for parents to submit ideas during conferences and other school community events

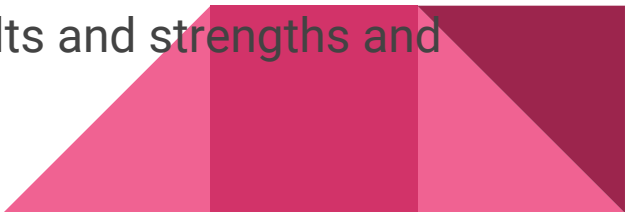
Tests and Assessments

Three Strengths: only 2 could be identified and supported by survey responses

1. Test data is regularly desegregated and linked back to the curriculum to ensure enhanced student performance.
2. Test data is not used to unfairly categorize students by race, sex or to relegate groups of students to a system of grouping that discourages them from learning.

One Challenge

The public is not systematically informed about test results and strengths and weaknesses of tests.



Research-Based Solution

Tests and Assessments

Challenge: The public is not systematically informed about test results and strengths and weaknesses of tests.

Solution: Send home Ohio School Report Card with end of year student report card to each family. During a regularly-scheduled Parent-Teacher Association meeting, invite a discussion among parents and staff regarding what level of cognition is measured by the assessment and how parents can support learning experiences in the home aligned with these assessment expectations (DuFour, DuFour and Eaker, 2008).

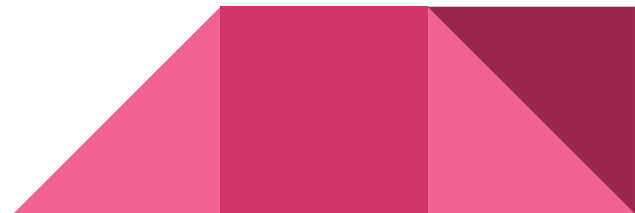
Budget Development

Three Strengths

The data showed no strengths in this area of the audit.

One Challenge

75% of teachers don't know their role in supporting curricular priorities financially.



Research-Based Solution

Budget Development

Challenge: 75% of teachers don't know their role in supporting curricular priorities financially.

Solution: Create a rotating Head of Department position within each discipline (Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies) by seeking one volunteer each school year in each discipline to meet with administrative decision-making staff with a maximum of one year term to be served until all departmental staff have rotated through the position. This will begin to develop the culture of having all instructional staff think in this vein to make curricular decisions regarding learning outcomes, integration ideas and materials needed (Fullan, 2013). Heads of Department will meet with Building Leadership Team (BLT) as necessary.

Productivity

Three Strengths

The data showed that there are no strengths in this area of the audit.

One Challenges

Families don't know how money is used to support student learning.



Research-Based Solution

Productivity

Challenge: Families don't know how money is used to support student learning.

Solution: To increase transparency, send home a school curriculum budget pie chart to let parents know how school fees, grants and federal monies are used with sections allocated to each subject discipline as well as technology, professional development and consumable materials (DuFour, DuFour and Eaker, 2008).



Reflection

Throughout this project, I've learned that many instructional staff members are unaware of the people and systems that determine curricular priorities, which ultimately, drive their daily job duties. In my current position, I am very aware and involved in making instructional decisions through working on the annual Decision-Making Framework to define financial priorities, to leading our monthly CSLT meeting and weekly TBTs. It was important for me to see things from the other side, as I have never held a K-12 teaching position to experience these decisions, and the implications of these decisions, from a teacher's perspective. Within a large urban school district, such as with the present school, the challenges we face in the path of improving curricular decision-making are intense and will require a high level of commitment and creativity to engage parents in meaningful partnership, to get the school board aligned with the true needs of our community and to increase teacher buy-in to work harder in this challenging climate to improve student achievement. I have always felt that if you increase the expectation, people will rise to the occasion; it's kind of the same as the saying, "dress for the job you want, not the job you have". In that vein, we must work for the end we want, not for the current state that we have. This all begins with a specific, common vision to drive all decisions. I don't love the idea of one group or person making these decisions; what I want for your child is very likely not what you want for your child; and it might not even be what your child wants for themselves. If, as a child, I were forced to go a school that emphasized learning applications and instructional materials that were not aligned with my lifestyle and interests, I would be disengaged and uninterested in my day-to-day experience. If I expect an intellectual fire to be ignited within myself, as an instructional leader, I therefore also expect those same fires to be ignited within my staff and within my students supported by their parents acting as kindling. Many leaders in education are afraid of transparency in budgets and assessments, however, if we continue to see ourselves as the gatekeepers of education, then we won't win this game and our students will lose. Just maybe, bringing students and parents onboard will help to increase the enjoyment and decrease the pressure placed on all parties. Why would I care if someone sees my budget? That money isn't mine. Why would I care if someone sees my assessment scores? Those children are theirs; the product of my work is their child's life, they have more right to see those scores than I do. It is simply my job to guide the students to higher levels of achievement and to help the parents understand the knowledge implications of these scores.

References

DuFour, R., DuFour, R. B., & Eaker, R. E. (2008). *Revisiting professional learning communities at work: New insights for improving schools*. Bloomington: Solution Tree.

Fullan, M. (2013). *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership, 3rd Edition* (M. Grogan, Ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.