

Equal Access to a Balanced, Standards-Based Curriculum

All students have access to the same standards-based curriculum that balances content coverage with the need to provide sufficient time for students to develop deep understanding of the most essential concepts and skills.

Vision Statement

We envision that all Newburyport students participate in a guaranteed and viable curriculum. A **guaranteed** curriculum means that every student will be instructed in the same content and skills, these being agreed to by all teachers at the grade level or in specific courses. It should not matter which teacher to whom a student was assigned, the same instructional goals and learning expectations would guarantee a consistent curriculum for all students. A **viable** curriculum is one that is focused on a limited number of standards and topics, this focus allowing for instructional depth, as opposed to the “coverage” of too many standards and topics. Making a curriculum viable requires teachers to prioritize and select from state standards and topics that may be suggested in the state curriculum frameworks or presented in a program or textbook. A viable curriculum helps to ensure that students learn the most important standards with a depth of understanding as opposed to simply covering too many standards with little depth of understanding. The guaranteed and viable curriculum is supported by strong curriculum documents with clear and high student learning expectations in all subject areas and grades. Curriculum is aligned with all state curriculum frameworks.

Our curriculum identifies key learning outcomes and emphasizes depth of study over covering too many topics or spending too much time with less important state curriculum framework standards. Our curriculum is rich with examples of assessments and strategies, samples of exemplary student work, and has clear learning expectations for each grade and subject area.

Formative (curriculum-based assessments) classroom assessments are administered frequently, giving teachers weekly and sometimes daily information about how to plan instruction. These assessments allow teachers to adjust instruction for the class and for individuals to help ensure that all students meet learning objectives.

Opportunity for Improvement

The school system has only recently initiated a process to develop a written consensus curriculum for all grades and subject areas. The absence of a written consensus curriculum has contributed to a lack of instructional cohesion and consistency across grade levels and subject areas. Basic curriculum maps of content were completed in June 2008 for English Language Arts in grades K-5 and in each subject Grades 6-8. All core High School courses and some elective courses were mapped as of June 2008.

The absence of consistently written curriculum has also negatively impacted:

- How teachers view their grade or subject in the context of other grades and subjects
- The development of common formative assessments that support instruction and learning
- Having a common base from which teachers can review data and student work

- The incidence of redundancy and omission, and
- The ability to improve alignment with state Curriculum Frameworks
- The tendency for teachers to try to cover too many standards and topics at the expense of instruction that is a mile wide and only an inch deep.

The curriculum is not yet clearly articulated and lacks depth in description of differentiated assessment, differentiated instructional strategies, and learning expectations for students.

Root Cause: Curriculum maps are yet to be written with sufficient depth needed to progress instructional consistency and cohesion

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Complete the “grass-roots” development of a written curriculum at all grades and in all subjects.	<p>Complete integration of comprehensive literacy, and begin integration of common formative assessment into ELA curriculum maps at grades PK-6. At grades 7-12, include common formative assessments with clearly stated learning expectations in all existing curriculum maps.</p> <p>Review and revise as necessary the long-term plan for curriculum mapping work.</p>
Continue to use early release days for curriculum development.	Continue to provide monthly release time for teachers to extend curriculum maps and to better establish the right balance between content coverage and teaching for understanding.
Train teachers to understand the curriculum they specialize in at deeper levels.	
Provide necessary curriculum materials.	

Root Cause: Insufficient professional development on instructional design

Insufficient professional development focused on design of instruction that supports student understanding has limited teachers’ ability to complete and implement the necessary curriculum.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
Provide more professional development on teaching for deep understanding and designing curriculum that provides access for all students.	Provide professional development in integrated therapies, co-teaching and differentiated instruction and assessment. Include all classroom staff (including special education teachers, therapists, counselors, etc.) in the curriculum mapping and design exercises.
Provide more professional development for teaching critical thinking skills.	
FY10 and beyond: Provide training and time for development of alternative forms of assessment.	
See strategies in the “Equal Access to a Common and Differentiated Learning Environment" goal.	

Root Cause: There is a need for more instructional innovation to prepare students with skills needed for 21st century

The need for more innovation in teaching techniques, different pedagogies, new instructional approaches, or interdisciplinary teaching diminishes student excitement for learning and limits improvement in student achievement.

Long Term Strategies	FY09 Specific Actions
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<p>Encourage "21st Century" instructional approaches and celebrate best examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative learning • interdisciplinary units • project based learning • community-based learning 	<p>Use instructional walk-throughs to encourage and support examples of best practice and inclusion of "21st Century" learning strategies. Use the teacher evaluation process to encourage more 21st Century approaches to instruction.</p> <p>Support teacher education in 21st Century instructional strategies through tuition reimbursement program.</p> <p>Connect teacher and administrator Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDP) to these District goals.</p>
<p>Allow for some of early release planning sessions to be used to brainstorm teaching approaches across departments. How can a PE teacher support the objectives of an Arts teacher? How can a science teacher and social studies teacher collaborate?</p>	