

Overview: West Jefferson Hills School District Curriculum

Introduction and Purpose

This curriculum framework outlines the West Jefferson Hills School District (WJHSD) K-12 curricular goals, defines a vision of instruction and assessment, and specifies what students are expected to know and be able to do by the end of each grade level in English/language arts, mathematics, science, technology, foreign language, art, music, business, and social studies. The WJHSD curriculum framework is designed to inform administrators, parents, and teachers of these curriculum goals.

Curriculum as defined in the WJHSD, is divided into three categories, the written, the taught, and the assessed or learned curriculum. The WJHSD curriculum framework establishes the written curriculum. In addition, within this framework is set forth a vision for curriculum, instruction, and assessment that will guide the development of the taught and learned curriculum.

The curriculum framework is aligned with Pennsylvania State Department of Education Content Standards, Core Learning Goals, and Learning Outcomes. The Pennsylvania Standards provide the foundation for the process of developing a scope and sequence of grade level indicators that define what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level in each content area. National and international standards also influenced the development and sequence of indicators within the curriculum. The feeling is that the WJHSD curriculum exceeds the Pennsylvania standards.

Philosophy

The WJHSD is committed to the following beliefs, which are embedded in all curriculum frameworks. The end goal of any curriculum must be to provide all students with the essential skills and knowledge to enable them to become productive citizens and lifelong learners. To this end, curriculum is well balanced among the disciplines and is appropriate for all students. Such a curriculum provides opportunities for all students to reach their potential. Curriculum must be both challenging and engaging so that students feel a sense of accomplishment and have a clear understanding of the value of what they are learning and its relevance to their lives. Curriculum provides a clear alignment of essential skills and knowledge, instruction, and formal assessment measures. The development and implementation of the written, taught, and learned curriculum reflects current research and best practices, relies on the process of monitoring student progress and utilizes technology to support instruction.

Vision of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The vision of curriculum, instruction, and assessment will guide the development of scope, sequences and curriculum guides. These vision statements will also guide the development of an instructional monitoring system and student assessment system.

In the WJHSD we believe that ...

Curriculum should . . .

- Be rigorous and relevant
- Be interesting, challenging, and relevant to children.
- Be based on research, best practices, and results.
- Be developed in a participatory process involving major stakeholders.
- Consist of a core of publicly stated standards, using Pennsylvania Standards as a starting point.
- Be organized in a coherent, logical manner for ease of instructional delivery.
- Be organized around important concepts derived from state content standards.
- Provide an evolving knowledge base, thinking processes, learning how to learn, and life-long learning skills for all students.
- Model instruction but allow for creative teacher delivery and meaningful student learning through an accessible, manageable, and flexible curriculum.
- Allow students to progress through the curriculum at different rates without meeting artificial barriers to learning (i.e. race, gender, socio-economic status, disability, and language).

Instruction should ...

- Reference the end product and keep the end in mind as each student progresses through the curriculum.
- Be engaging, interesting and build on student strengths.
- Be based on research, best practices, and results.
- Be congruent with the written and assessed curriculum.
- Be individualized by pace, breadth, depth, and interest to provide an “optimal match” between the learner and the task(s).
- Maximize the use of technology as a tool for learning.
- Reflect consistent teaching processes and common instructional vocabulary.

Assessment should...

- Accurately reflect the attainment of the expectations of curriculum standards.
- Be age-appropriate, varied in rigor, and culturally sensitive.
- Include formative and summative assessment as well as a variety of performance-based and standardized assessments.
- Be regularly reported to students and parents in a systematic manner.
- Be based on authentic work products while interweaving problem solving and critical thinking into the learning process.
- Be used to provide feedback to students and parents.

- Be used as constant/daily monitoring to adjust instruction to meet the needs of students.
- Be based on a continuous improvement model for both instructional delivery and student learning.
- Model the shared accountability system with the system responsible for providing resources necessary to implement the curriculum, administrators responsible for monitoring achievement and progress, teachers responsible for effectively delivering the curriculum, students responsible for learning, and parents responsible for supporting their children in pursuing an education.

Meeting the Needs of All Students

The scope and sequence of indicators within the curriculum framework represents the core of knowledge and processes that all WJHSD students are expected to master by the end of specific grade levels. Thus, it represents a foundation, not a ceiling, for students. Most students will excel beyond these expectations at some point in their educational experience. The curriculum framework enables parents, teachers, students, and administrators to determine whether students are meeting expectations for their grade level. Pre-assessment may reveal that many students have already met some of those expectations and are ready for the next level of challenge. Other students may need additional support in order to meet or exceed the core expectations. However, the goal is clear, the curriculum framework represents a minimum standard for all students.

Differentiation of instruction enables students with diverse backgrounds and strengths to meet or exceed the curriculum goals. Pre-assessment plays a critical role in determining whether students are ready to acquire the skills and content, have already acquired it and are ready for the next challenge, or in need of additional support to achieve the core expectations or excel beyond them.

Students who demonstrate mastery of grade level expectations should be provided with opportunities to accelerate and enrich their learning. Enrichment provides opportunities to explore content and concepts in greater depth and to refine critical thinking and research skills.

Access to challenging curriculum can be provided for underachieving students by identifying the essential concepts and skills that students need to move them on to on grade level performance, accelerating their instruction, and increasing learning time on those outcomes. By focusing on what clearly moves underachieving students to grade level performance and beyond in a particular content area, struggling students gain time to extend and enrich their understanding.

To achieve academically, English language learners must develop English language competencies that will allow them to construct and apply academic knowledge in all content areas. These students face the dual challenge of learning a new language while continuing their academic growth. Effective English language instruction, therefore,

cannot be planned in isolation. It must be based on second language learning theory and aligned with content-based standards. ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), as well as all content curriculum, must address the linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural needs of these students in order to insure their success.

Glossary of Curriculum Terms

Curriculum is a cohesive, connected, and congruent set of documents that outline expectations for student learning, instructional practices, and assessment. To help establish a common understanding of the written curriculum, the WJHSD has used the following definitions in this and other curriculum documents.

acceleration: Increasing the pace of students' instructional program.

advanced placement (AP) course: A high school course that provides curriculum which is accelerated and often equated with college level material.

advanced placement (AP) assessment: Assessments that determine student mastery of AP material in a specific course.

Assessments:

pre-assessment: An essential step in determining advance student mastery and/or readiness to learn a specific concept, process, or skill.

formative assessment: Ongoing assessment that monitors student progress toward mastery of a specific concept, process, or skill; examples are daily student work, brief assessment, and teacher observation.

summative assessment: An assessment that measures student mastery of a performance indicator or indicators taught within a unit of study, course, or year.

standardized assessment: An assessment measure in which the items are derived from a set of criteria (criterion referenced) and/or individually referenced)

performance assessment: An assessment in which students are presented with an authentic (real world) task; items measuring student mastery of specific indicators are embedded in the task; most performance assessments require written responses.

selected response assessment: An assessment in which students respond by selecting the correct response from a list of possible answers.

authentic work products: Student products that demonstrate application of skills and knowledge to a real world situation or problem.

clarifying examples: An example of student behavior or student product that contains evidence of student mastery for a specific indicator within a standard.

compacting: Adjusting students' instructional program through pre-assessments that document what they have and have not mastered. Compacting allows underachieving students to focus on selected concepts and skills that will result in grade level performance. It also enables gifted and talented students to avoid introductory activities, review, and drill on previously mastered material so that learning time can be reinvested in a deepened understanding of significant concepts through enrichment or access to above grade level instruction through acceleration.

curriculum framework: A curriculum framework contains the vision for instruction and assessment, a rationale for each discipline, as well as the scope and sequence of indicators for each grade level. The curriculum framework informs the development of the scope and sequence of units, formative assessment measures, and instructional guides.

differentiation: Adjusting instruction for students with different needs so that each student can attain mastery of a performance indicator.

enduring understanding: A lasting idea or concept that is centrally important to a discipline and valuable to the individual.

enrichment: Providing students opportunities to learn materials in greater depth and breadth

essential questions: Questions that examine student knowledge to determine if they have acquired an enduring understanding.

guided practice: is a general term for the work that most often goes on in the classroom. Working during class time is an effective way for students to review and practice new information under the guidance of an instructor. For students, a natural extension of reviewing new material under teacher direction is engaging in practice at an independent time and location. Most homework falls in this category.

indicator: A specific statement related to a standard that describes, in specific detail, what students should know and be able to do at a particular grade level.

inquiry: is a technique that engages students in posing their own questions around an instructional topic. Teachers often stimulate this by creating an intriguing investigation, which can be a unique observation, a demonstration, or question posed to students. Then students are encouraged, usually in cooperative teams, to make additional observations and pose questions. With the teacher's guidance, students are led to a significant understanding of the topic. Teachers can stimulate discussion through asking thoughtful questions and challenging students to think and form their own opinions.

instructional strategies: Described below, can be effective in developing more rigorous and relevant instruction. They are brainstorming, cooperative learning, demonstrations, guided practice, inquiry, instructional technology, lectures, memorization, note taking/graphic organizers, presentations/exhibitions, problem-based learning, project design, research, simulation/role playing, Socratic seminars, teacher questions and worked-based learning.

instructional guide: A curriculum guide contains specific information for teachers to carry out the goals of the curriculum. Guides are developed by disciplines and usually organized into units of instruction based on the Pennsylvania standards. A curriculum guide should have the four major components

- A. Clearly established outcomes directly based on the assessed standards and indicators.
- B. A context for learning or enduring understanding of the discipline and essential questions.
- C. A model for instruction to meet the standards as well as to meet the needs of the learner, including use of instructional resources (textbooks, technology).
- D. A model for assessing student progress towards standards and student mastery of the standards.

international standards: Curriculum standards from other nations or test specifications from an international assessment such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study

learning styles: How the students learn. Certain instructional strategies are more effective with particular learning styles. The four categories of learning styles are:

- Concrete-sequential learners respond to well-organized instruction that requires them to recall and construct correct responses.
- Abstract-sequential learners respond to collaborative instruction that requires them to analyze information and explain answers.
- Concrete-random learners respond to opportunities to be creative and design products and individual responses.
- Abstract-random learners respond to creative learning activities that emphasize brainstorming and role-playing. (Definitions are from the International Center for Leadership in Education).

national standards: Curriculum standards for each discipline developed over a period of years by nationally recognized organizations involving representatives from universities, school systems, and business and industry who are considered experts in the field by their peers.

Pennsylvania standards: Descriptors of student behaviors or products that indicate mastery or proximity to mastery of a specific indicator.

performance series: is a web-based, computer adaptive diagnostic test that is reliable, valid, and standards based. Used in grades 2-8 to pinpoint proficiency levels instantly,

place students in the appropriate programs, report progress, and predict performance on high stakes tests.

proficiency levels: is a descriptor of student behaviors or products that indicate mastery or proximity to mastery of a specific indicator.

PSSA: Pennsylvania State Standard Assessment is an annual performance assessment keyed to the Pennsylvania State standards given in March of each year to all students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11.

PSAT (Preliminary SAT): A test developed by the Educational Testing Service for high school students as a practice test for the actual SAT. Students receive detailed information regarding how they scored on each question.

Rigor/ Relevance Framework: is a tool developed by staff of the International Center for Leadership in Education to examine curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The Framework has four quadrants.

- Quadrant A represents *acquisition*, simple recall and basic understanding of knowledge for its own sake. Students gather and store bits of knowledge and information. Students are primarily expected to remember or understand this acquired knowledge.
- Quadrant B represents *application*: Students use acquired knowledge to solve problems, design solutions, and complete work. The highest level of application is to apply appropriate knowledge to new and unpredictable situations.
- Quadrant C represents *assimilation*: Students extend and refine their acquired knowledge to be able to use that knowledge automatically and routinely to analyze and solve problems and create unique solutions.
- Quadrant D represents *adaptation*: Students have the competence to think in complex ways and also apply knowledge and skills they have acquired. Even when confronted with perplexing unknowns, students are able to use extensive knowledge and skills to create solutions and take action that further develops their skills and knowledge.

SAT: (formerly the Scholastic Achievement Test): A test developed by the Educational Testing Service for the College Board given to high school students to determine readiness for college work.

Standard: A broad statement of what students are expected to know and be able to do by the end of grade 12, used to guide and organize content expectations K-12