



Update on System Reviews:

Curriculum Management Review

Highlights – February 27th, 2008

Background and Goals

- At Seattle Public Schools, we are committed to creating success for every student. We know and believe that all students can achieve.
- We continue to review what is working and what needs to be improved. As part of that process, the district commissioned a series of external reviews. Several, including the Curriculum Review, were initiated in spring 2007 by Chief Academic Officer, Carla Santorno. Others were initiated by Superintendent Goodloe-Johnson. To date the district has received reviews on the Accelerated Progress Program (APP), Special Education, and Academic Safety Net services; and on Communications. Reviews of bilingual services, Information Technology, Human Resources and Finance are underway.
- The Curriculum review was conducted by the International Curriculum Management Audit Center, Phi Delta Kappa International. A Curriculum Management Audit measures districts against best-practice standards and notes “exceptions” to those standards, then makes recommendations on steps needed to reach standard. The review included in-depth analysis of documents as well as interviews and site visits to schools in October 2007. About 180 individuals were interviewed, 92 schools were visited, and nearly 1000 classroom observations were made by the review team.
- It is the job of the district to receive and analyze the report, to consider how the findings and recommendations fit for Seattle, and to include appropriate actions in the district’s strategic plan.
- The review focused on five standards: control (resources, programs, personnel), direction (curriculum scope), connectivity and equity, feedback and assessment, productivity and efficiency (budget development and decision-making process).

Review Highlights

- Key themes that emerge are similar to those reflected in other reviews, and relate to the need to be systemic, comprehensive, and focused in the district’s approach to curriculum management.
- The overarching theme of the report is that Seattle Public Schools does not currently have, and must develop, a systemic and comprehensive approach to curriculum management. That means that the District needs clear board policies related to curriculum; a detailed plan for design, delivery and evaluation of district curriculum; and a comprehensive assessment system to measure the effectiveness of curriculum.

- The report also recommends that district planning needs to focus around a few measurable goals over a period of two to three years to provide a systemic focus for the entire district. Depth of involvement rather than broad, uncoordinated efforts will deliver the appropriate results.
- Research clearly shows that this level of effort to establish a systemic and comprehensive approach to district curriculum is an absolute requirement for the significant advances in academic achievement to which we are all committed.

Curriculum Review Highlights by Topic

- **Policy:** Policies must direct educational decisions and are necessary for effective curriculum management.

Recommendation: Update, revise, design and implement board policies that provide for adequate control of local curriculum management.

- **Effective planning:** Effective planning is essential for focusing and organizing district resources to meet changing student needs.

Recommendation: Consolidate planning efforts to provide clear direction, coordination, prioritization, and sequencing of initiatives at all levels of the system to define and prioritize district goals.

- **Organization:** Effective school districts are organized in cost-effective ways with defined responsibilities, established role definitions, and relationships.

Recommendation: Develop an organizational chart with corresponding written job position descriptions and appraisals that will provide sound management with focus on the design and delivery of curriculum.

- **Curriculum:** A comprehensive curriculum management plan, coordinated with all district and site plans, enables a district to achieve and maintain a quality, aligned curriculum.

Recommendation: Develop, document, and implement a comprehensive curriculum management plan. This will include creating single curriculum guides for every district course that meet audit criteria, support desired instructional practices, and provide instructional quality control. It will require facilitating the training of all administrators, teachers, and instructional staff in the effective use of these curriculum documents, and will require the delivery of this curriculum with the intent of achieving high levels of learning by students.

- **Assessment:** A district-wide process that addresses student assessment and program evaluation in a comprehensive manner provides the quantity and quality of information that district staff needs to make rational decisions about the design of the curriculum, the delivery of instruction, the effectiveness of programs, and the effectiveness and efficiency of all district functions.

Recommendation: Formalize comprehensive assessment procedures to provide data for decision-making at all levels of the system. The district should review, revise, and implement the current Board policy for selection, implementation, and evaluation of programs utilizing data linked to student achievement that will be used as feedback for initiation, revision, continuation, or elimination of programs and practices.

- **Equity:** A well managed school system provides all students equal access to the programs, services, and opportunities provided by the district.

Recommendation: Develop and implement a plan that provides equal access for students to district and school programs, services, and opportunities; and monitor practices to eliminate differences in achievement among student groups.

- **Productivity:** Linkage between the budget and programs that lead to predetermined priorities, goals, and strategies for improving student achievement is critical to the success of the school system. Seattle Public Schools has collected a large amount of data concerning its facilities and has identified possible solutions for issues that impact facilities, transportation, and maintenance.

Recommendation: Develop and implement a plan that aligns district and building level resources to curricular goals and strategic priorities. This should include systematic cost-benefits analyses to assure that expenditures are producing the desired results. It also recommends the use of data collected to meet the needs of declining enrollment and a feeder pattern to assist in this process.

Curriculum Review Findings

- The major findings are organized around the five standards. These findings provided the basis for the recommendations produced by Phi Delta Kappa International. The broad range of findings includes areas where the district needs improvement and where the district is currently meeting standard. These findings are summarized in the following chart.

Standard	Findings
<p>Standard 1: The school district demonstrates its control of resources, programs, and personnel.</p>	<p>Finding 1: Board policies do not provide for adequate control of local curriculum management and other district functions.</p>
	<p>Finding 1.2: Past planning resulted in a written plan that was designed to guide district action but is not currently guiding systemic decision making. Superintendents' work plans serve as effective guides for direction of district efforts. School Transformation Plans lack concentrated focus on attainable goals.</p>
	<p>Finding 1.3: There is an absence of centralized systemic processes to provide control and consistency in direction. A culture of autonomy has fragmented the system and diluted accountability.</p>
	<p>Finding 1.4: Organizational function charts do not meet audit criteria for determining sound general management of the district. Job descriptions provide clear specifications of responsibilities, relationship, and linkage to curriculum but do not match recent function structures.</p>
<p>Standard 2: The school district has established clear and valid objectives for students.</p>	<p>Finding 2.1: A comprehensive curriculum management plan is not in place to direct the design, delivery, and evaluation of the district's curriculum. Professional development opportunities do not provide a comprehensive link to the delivery of the district curriculum.</p>
	<p>Finding 2.2: The scope of the district curriculum documents is adequate with the inclusion of online course documents.</p>
	<p>Finding 2.3: The quality of existing curriculum documents does not meet audit criteria to support teaching and learning.</p>

Standard	Findings
<p>Standard 3: The school district demonstrates internal consistency and rational equity in its program development and implementation.</p>	<p>Finding 3.1 Inequalities exist for students to access programs, services, and opportunities.</p>
	<p>Finding 3.2: District practices and programs are inadequate and inconsistently implemented to provide the impetus needed to eliminate the difference in achievement among student groups.</p>
	<p>Finding 3.3: Observed classroom instructional practices are inconsistent with the system’s stated expectations.</p>
<p>Standard 4: The school district uses the results from system-designed and/or- adopted assessments to adjust, improve, or terminate ineffective practices or programs.</p>	<p>Finding 4.1: The district lacks a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan to guide decisions for improving student achievement.</p>
	<p>Finding 4.2: The scope of assessment is inadequate to guide curriculum and instructional decision making.</p>
	<p>Finding 4.3: Student performance on the state tests is increasing in most subject areas and grade levels and has begun to meet or surpass the state average in many areas. The achievement gap that exists among student groups is closing in some areas and increasing in others.</p>
	<p>Finding 4.4: Data are inconsistently used district-wide to provide feedback for systemic decision making.</p>
	<p>Finding 4.5: Program interventions to improve student achievement are not formally planned, implemented, monitored, or evaluated for long-term effectiveness.</p>

Standard	Findings
Standard 5: The school district has improved productivity.	Finding 5.1: Long-range facilities plan is adequate to address the needs of student enrollment; design of the existing student assignment plan compromises the effectiveness of the facility plan.
	Finding 5.2: School facilities are generally clean and adequately maintained to support a learning environment, although in some schools the backlog of maintenance and repairs hampers instructional activities.
	Finding 5.3: The district's financial decision-making processes and budget development procedures are not aligned with board policy statement or the Five-Year Plan's strategic priorities.

Next Steps and Timeline

- The next step is to further analyze the findings in the report and to begin work on developing short and long-term goals. Linda Hoste, Director of Curriculum, will lead this work. Teams will be formed to consider various aspects of this review. The work of creating a system wide approach to effective curriculum management will involve the School Board, central staff, and the many teachers and staff throughout our district.
- A key point to note is that the findings of the curriculum review, along with all other reviews, will be considered as the Superintendent leads development of a long-range strategic plan for Seattle Public Schools. All strategies and improvements will be aligned, and actions phased to result in successful outcomes for all students. The goal for development of the Strategic Plan is spring 2008.

For more information

The report prepared by the external review team will be available on the district's Website after 6:00pm on February 27th at: <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/strategicplan/background.xml>, along with a copy of this highlights summary.

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