Curriculum Mapping: a Road to Multi-Year Success

Imagine if you and a group of fellow teachers were expected to take every student from your district on a trip from Boston to New Orleans. At its most basic, a trip of that scope would be wildly complicated. Then imagine if each teacher only took the students part way, then handed them off to the next teacher. What if some of the kids started their journey in Maine and some in Boston and others joined in Virginia? How could this possibly be accomplished? The only way to succeed would be to have a great deal of cooperation, a detailed plan, and a very comprehensive map.

Now think of that journey as the trip we take students on during their academic careers. The questions are similar: How will we get a diverse group of students to an agreed-upon destination (college and career ready) by the time they leave our care? How will we know if they’re on track; what will we do if they aren’t; and how will we maintain the course if new kids enter while we’re already en route?

Curriculum Mapping enables educators to address these questions and more. Curriculum Units usually cover a 2-8 week learning period (the equivalent of a trip from Boston to DC), support short-term classroom goals, and focus on a few standards. Curriculum Maps lay out the bigger picture (more like the entire trip from New England to New Orleans), and they are used by grade-level or content area teams to identify what occurs in each grade level or content area across an entire year.

A curriculum map, in the broadest sense, is a tool that educators develop or use to chart the direction of students' learning and progress. Educators can develop and use curriculum maps to plan a logical approach to student learning. When we talk about curriculum maps, we’re talking about maps charting how students will progress towards mastery of standards. The purpose of curriculum mapping is to organize common efforts in a district so that all students will be exposed to the same, well-planned, sequential, agreed-upon curriculum.

The process of curriculum mapping is as useful as the final product because of the insights educators gain as they develop maps. Once developed, a map continues to evolve as educators return to it to record what was actually taught and make adjustments to better achieve their goals.

Over the past three years, ESE has worked with the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative and the Collaborative for Educational Services to develop examples of standards-based curriculum maps from districts. According to Andrew

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<td><strong>WGBH</strong>, media partner for the ESE, is out in the community and online, talking about the MCU and digital resources to support you in the classroom. Look for us at these events, ask about our MCU flash drive giveaway, and sign up for our raffle prizes:</td>
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<td><strong>NSTA (National Science Teachers Association)</strong> National Conference March 12-15, 2015 McCormick Place West Chicago, IL</td>
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<td><strong>Massachusetts Reading Association</strong> April 9-10 Quincy, MA Stop by the WGBH/PBS LearningMedia booth on Saturday, April 9 for an informal Q&amp;A session with MCU project leadership team member Sarah Churchill Silberman. Come by and ask her your curriculum questions!</td>
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<td><strong>NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics)</strong> National Conference April 15-18, 2015 Boston Convention &amp; Exhibition Center Boston, MA NCTM is in Boston this year! A great opportunity for Massachusetts teachers to attend this annual conference. WGBH Education/PBS LearningMedia will be there. Stay tuned for information about giveaways for classroom math</td>
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Churchill, Executive Director, Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (PERC) and one of the key partners in this process, "Curriculum Mapping should lead to a district or school-wide consensus about what all students should know and be able to do, and clarifies the responsibilities of, and handoffs between, teachers at different levels. Mapping provides the foundation for giving all students access to a guaranteed curriculum." The maps and webinars about mapping can be found on ESE’s website.

A recent webinar from the Governor's Readiness Centers presented examples of curriculum maps from several districts and showed how they incorporate:

- Content and standards
- Assessments (interim periods as well as end-of-year)
- Resources and materials related to core curriculum materials and supplementary resources
- Sequences of learning (and how units are organized in a timeline)
- Alignment of curricula with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (the 2011 ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks incorporate the Common Core Standards)

Some of the districts contributing maps include Lowell, Revere, Worcester, and Cape Cod's Nauset region. In Worcester, the work is district-wide. Andrew Churchill explained Worcester's process, "First they identified key concepts that needed to be covered at each level of education in the district, based on the state standards, and then developed a scope and sequence for each grade which was basically a series of sequenced curriculum units. So the map is the broad sequencing of units based on key standards for each grade level. Each unit then goes in depth into how the concepts and skills in that unit will be taught and assessed - learning goals, instructional practices, curriculum resources, etc."

You can access curriculum maps on the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (PERC) site as mentioned above, or you can access them, along with additional curriculum resources, on the ESE site.

Implementation Video: US History II - Using Primary Sources to discuss Essential Questions
U.S. History II-Civil Rights Movement-Using Primary Sources to discuss Essential Questions

In this video from the ESE, teacher Adam Ingano of Clinton High School in Clinton, MA implements the model curriculum unit (MCU) U.S. History II-Civil Rights Movement-Using Primary Sources to discuss Essential Questions. He focuses on two essential questions: "What is the purpose of dissent in society?" and "How can individuals and/or groups affect a positive change?"

In this MCU, students use their knowledge of the African American struggle for civil rights in application to both historical and current problems of equality. The standards focus on analyzing the Civil Rights movement, describing it's accomplishments, and gathering relevant information from multiple sources to assess credibility and accuracy with the goal of usage.

Ingano states in the video that he likes to use primary sources in almost every single lesson to make sure students are "seeing, reading, or hearing from the time period." The video illustrates tactics for stimulating collaborative discussions including how to structure access to the source materials. The video also discusses planning an exit strategy both as a tool to conclude the lesson, and a way for students to process the work they just concluded.

To see other implementation videos, visit the DESE MCU web page. Fill out the short registration form to receive an access link then click on the link to view the list of MCUs. Every video icon in the list represents an implementation video.