



# A Beginner's Guide to Curriculum Mapping

Creating, implementing, and sustaining an adaptable curriculum



# How to Create a Curriculum Map

**The purpose of this guide is simple: to shatter the myth that curriculum mapping is difficult.**

You can build a living and breathing curriculum with fidelity. Whether you're a district superintendent, part of a seasoned curriculum team needing a quick refresher, or a team member with limited experience, this beginner's guide is for you.

# Why Create a Curriculum Map?

**Improve student outcomes.** Teachers who understand the curriculum better will be more flexible in their teaching methods. They will be able to ensure their students completely understand important concepts by structuring classes around the big picture.

**Support teachers with a shared resource center.** Capturing assessments, lesson plans, and best practices within one place can improve instruction. More experienced teachers can easily share their knowledge with new teachers. A curriculum map provides a vast resource pool that includes hyperlinks to resources in context.

**Put new initiatives into practice faster.** Curriculum maps can create a bridge between standards and lesson plans by bringing new resources into the classroom. Districts can directly reference new initiatives, like STEM or social and emotional learning, in the curricular units to demonstrate the material in practice.

**Encourage collaboration across schools.** Curriculum maps encourage teachers to discuss best practices and share resources, improving the overall teaching level across the school district. Families benefit from structured curriculum maps in that they know the exact learning targets for their students. Students receive a coherent curriculum throughout the class, with a scaffolding flow of knowledge from term to term and year to year.

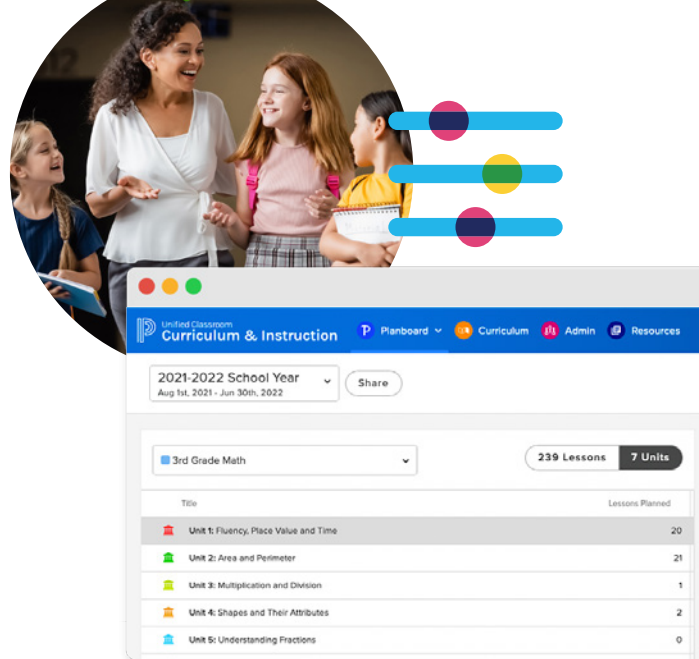
**Save money on textbooks.** Districts and schools can save money by creating their curriculum maps rather than buying them from textbook publishers. This also allows for more control over what teachers teach at the school.



## CHAPTER #1:

# Why Curriculum Map?

Curriculum mapping is a process that enables districts and schools to gather data on what educators are actually teaching and what students are actually learning. This process results in a curriculum map for each subject and grade level that teachers can use as a tool to stay organized and a framework for daily lesson planning.



*Curriculum mapping is not a spectator sport. It demands teachers' ongoing preparation and active participation. There must also be continual support from administrators who have a clear understanding and insight into the intricacies of the mapping process.*

— J.A. Hale, 2008

**A curriculum map for a subject consists of a collection of unit plans that align with a set of content standards.** The unit plans define the content's scope by considering the desired learning outcomes. The unit plans also tie to a defined sequence based on the appropriate scaffolding of the content standards. We commonly refer to this as the "scope and sequence" document.

Effective curriculum is planned backward from long-term, desired results through a three-stage design process: **Desired Results, Evidence, and Learning Plan**. This process helps avoid common problems such as treating the textbook as the curriculum rather than a resource or activity-oriented teaching with no clear priorities and purposes.

**The most significant benefit to curriculum mapping is its ability to improve schools' links between curriculum, assessment, and instruction.** Many teachers take pride in creating and delivering lessons that engage and educate their students. Still, they must also consider how their work aligns with national and state or provincial standards. Curriculum mapping supports teachers' efforts to track how many of the required standards, content, and skills they have addressed and what's left to cover.

Teachers are already analyzing, synthesizing, and organizing their curriculum to find gaps and repetitions in implementing learning standards. A curriculum map built for teachers could ease this process and even allow them to go more in depth. As a result, teachers can begin to formulate their cross-curricular connections between subject matter and promote an interdisciplinary approach to learning.



Curriculum mapping shifts the instructional focus toward deeper understanding beyond basic content acquisition. Curriculum mapping is a learning process for the teacher and helps them take ownership of the curriculum.

Good curriculum maps at a district or school follow a standard format that enables educators to discuss effective teaching and increases transparency across grade levels and subject areas.

## How Do Curriculum Maps Help Teachers?

The purpose of a curriculum map is to document the relationship between every component of the curriculum. A curriculum map, when used as an analysis, communication, and planning tool, can:

- Allow educators to review the curriculum and check for redundancies, inconsistencies, misalignments, weaknesses, and gaps
- Document the relationships between the required components of the curriculum and the intended student learning outcomes
- Help identify opportunities for integration among disciplines
- Provide a review of assessment methods
- Identify what students have learned, allowing educators to focus on building on previous knowledge

As the group of students changes every year, the ideal teaching strategy will also change. So, curriculum maps do not tell teachers how to teach specific content. Instead, they provide a variety of methods to teach the content, allowing each teacher to use the strategy they think will work best for their classroom.

# Balancing Content Across Grade Levels

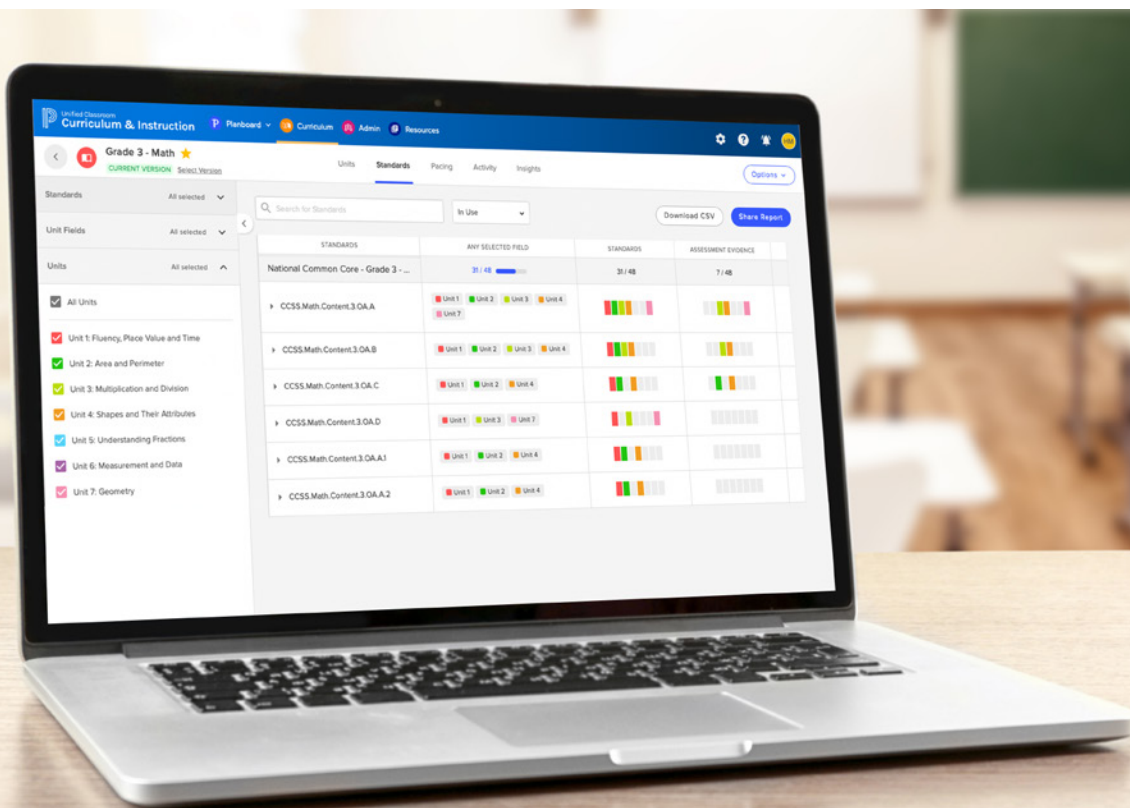
With curriculum mapping, teachers and administrators can look into each class, understand what students actually learn, and use this information to identify redundancies or gaps in the course content. This process also helps teachers and administrators assess the structure and sequencing of the course.

## Aligning to Standards

If there are three different grade nine Math classes at the school or district, curriculum mapping can ensure each class will cover the same content and receive the same quality of instruction.

Curriculum mapping aims to ensure that assessments and other methods of evaluating learning progress consider what teachers actually teach to students. This evaluation is easy when teachers actively record what they've done and will do next.

Curriculum mapping also provides an easy link to learning standards that the students should meet in a particular course, subject area, or grade level. This link supports vertical alignment, as educators can see if students start the school year with the skills required and end the school year prepared for the requirements of the next grade.



## Recording Throughout the Term

Develop curriculum maps before the start of the term. Teachers may or may not have participated in the original curriculum mapping process, but once the term begins, they are responsible for tracking the progression through the curriculum.

**Curriculum mapping is not a spectator sport—it requires teachers’ ongoing preparation and active participation.** Teachers can reference these maps as part of their regular lesson planning process. When teachers reference curriculum maps, it’s easy to get an idea of what really happened in classrooms compared to the original plan.

Measure the instructional content and the teachers’ strategies during the learning process in real-time by months or grading periods. **We recommend recording data at least once a month to capture all essential details.**

## Curriculum Maps Are Never "Done"

As teachers continually add more information to curriculum maps, they are never actually finished. The teacher’s notes address how they accommodated varied student needs within a lesson plan each year. Curriculum maps undergo ongoing development to improve student learning and content quality across schools.

As long as teachers have new students, new classes, and new school years, they will need to assess and revise the content and structure. This ongoing process ensures that students get the most out of their education and teachers use the most effective strategies in their lessons. Curriculum mapping can create and maintain an ongoing, collaborative curriculum environment.

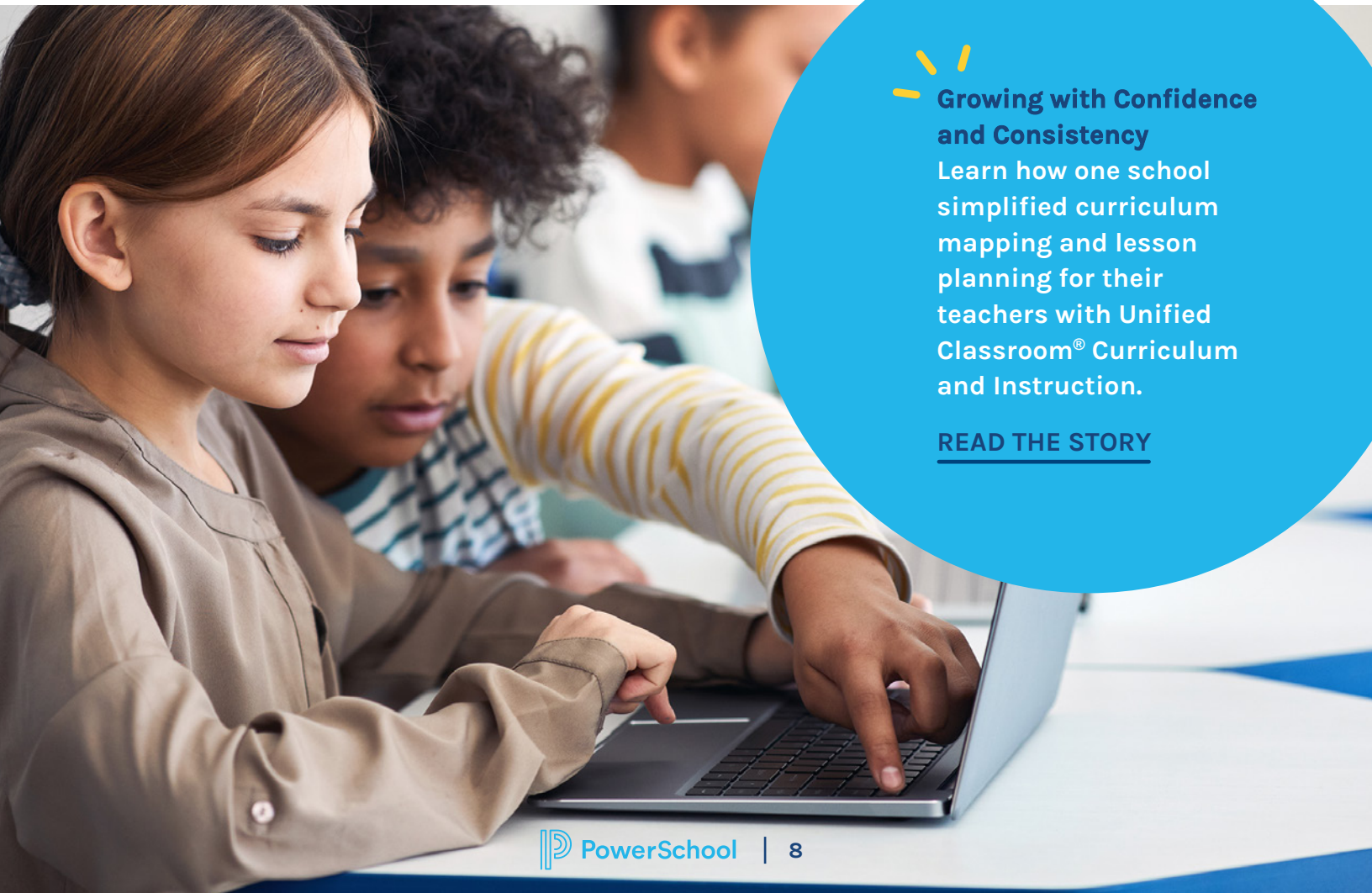
## Administration Support


Ideally, all teachers and administrators can view curriculum maps within a school or district on a secure server accessed through the internet. Administrators need access to clearly understand the mapping process’s intricacies and provide continual support to teachers. They will conduct the curriculum review process, planning to implement any necessary changes the following year.

**Curriculum mapping is a complex process with many moving parts, and collaboration from teachers can help successful implementation.**

## Benefits of Using a Curriculum Map

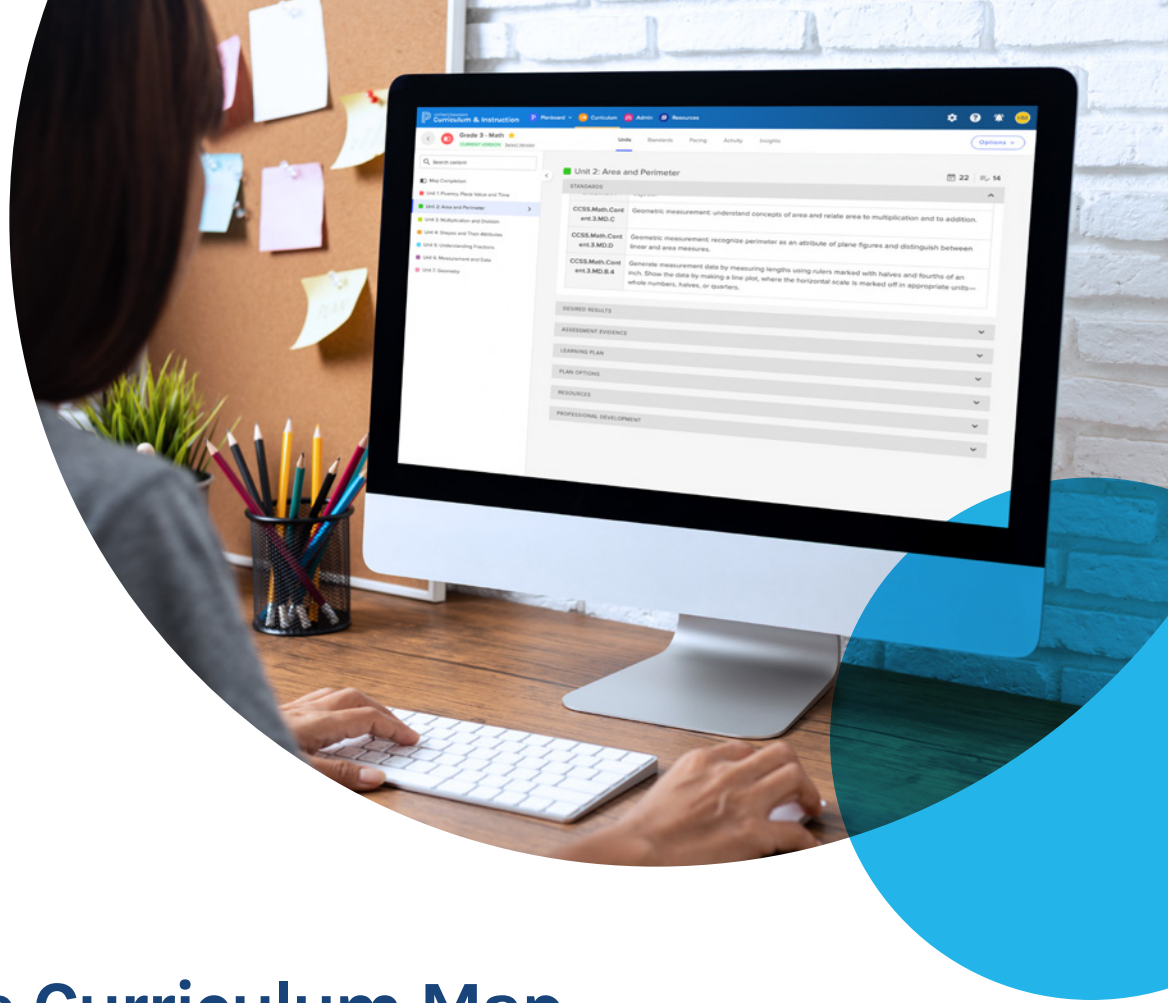
- Teachers gain a more thorough understanding of the curriculum by associating learning goals with the standards, resulting in improved practice.
- Teachers feel more comfortable contributing to the curriculum and can reduce their reliance on textbooks.
- Curriculum mapping provides a better understanding of the opportunities to build on what your students already know while minimizing gaps and repetition.
- Educators gain greater insight into curriculum structures, curricular content, and student progress.
- With online tools that aid transparency across a district, curriculum maps become a vehicle to enhance interdisciplinary teaching strategies, knowledge sharing, and instructional resources.
- Curriculum maps allow leaders and administrators to collect data about the operational curriculum and increase transparency more efficiently across the district.



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## CHAPTER #2:

# Creating a Curriculum Map

The most robust type of curriculum map includes a complete description of how to convert standards into lesson plans. A basic curriculum map consists of the class scope and the instructional material sequencing.

A basic curriculum map includes:

- **Standards** – State, governmental, or other standards related to the class
- **Sequence** – The order that teachers teach the standards in the class

More advanced curriculum maps will include content, skills, pacing guides, assessments, and resources. Adding the following fundamentals to basic standards and sequence maps will make sure that teachers have a clear understanding of the material to cover in their classes:

- **Content** – This includes the instructional material’s key concepts, facts, and events. Express content as a noun–like multiplication or evolution. There are three standard formats for content:
  - Discipline-based content focuses on a subject.
  - Interdisciplinary content focuses on connections between two or more subjects.
  - Student-centered content focuses on student-developed interests.

- **Skills** – These are what teachers are assessing, observing, and documenting. Skills are expressed as verbs, like write or calculate. These skills can also relate to the goals for students beyond standards.
- **Assessments** – Any number of broad approaches to gauge student learning.
- **Activities** – Specific actions within a classroom to drive student mastery in skills and standards.
- **Resources** – Additional information to enhance student understanding of content.
- **Essential Questions** – Questions that students can answer at the end of the class to indicate their understanding of the content and mastery of skills.
- **Timelines** – The expected time that it will take to teach each unit.
- **Pacing Guide** – A measure to help teachers stay on track and to ensure curricular continuity across classrooms and schools in the district.
- **Units** – Concepts and learning goals taught over a period.

Dive deeper into how to design a scope and sequence within your unit plans.

## Types of Curriculum Maps

Although most curriculum maps will include the same elements, there are various methods of creating them, depending on the needs of your teachers and students:

- **Diary** – A record of what was actually taught by a teacher in one subject in the school. Each teacher records what they do for a set period. Use this diary to adjust the curriculum as necessary for the following year.
- **Projected** – Each teacher maps out what they plan to do for one course or subject at the beginning of the term or the entire school year.
- **Consensus** – A planned learning map by teachers for curricula guidelines at a school or district level. The map's creators agree that the course learning ties back to the standards. Teachers use the Consensus map as a foundation for their course learning and instruction.
- **Essential** – An entire school year of learning planned and recorded by grading periods. These are district-level maps created by a team of educators focusing on district learning expectations. This map guides all who teach the course in planning learning or creating collaborative Consensus or Projected maps.

## Where Should You Start?

Now that you understand what to include and how to create a curriculum map, it's time to start writing.

Start the curriculum mapping process by developing a list of topics based on teacher input, district curriculum, the district learning philosophy, student needs, and past experience.

- **Teacher input** – Perspectives from the grade-level teaching team and vertically-aligned teachers.
- **District curriculum** – The broad mission of the district, including criteria like Common Core, TEKS, IB philosophy, and State Standards.
- **District learning philosophy** – This might include a focus on citizenship, problem-solving, or the development of lifelong learners.
- **Student needs** – Your students may struggle more in certain subjects but excel in others, so keeping this in mind while planning content can help ensure student success.
- **Past experience** – Review what worked and what didn't in previous years to have a solid foundation for what to include in the future.

Consensus and projected maps will begin with the essential map if available. Then, teachers can modify the map for their specific needs. If no essential map is available, start with the list of topics in the bullet points above.



# Understanding by Design Stages

*To us, the ultimate goal of education is to spark a pursuit of knowledge in the child, so that they keep on learning as they grow into whoever they choose to be – John F. Kennedy*

Engaging learners in thoughtful "meaning-making" helps develop and deepen their understanding of essential ideas and processes. Students learn knowledge and skills as a means to larger ends.

There are two broad types of assessment:

- **Performance tasks** – Ask students to apply their learning to a new and authentic situation to assess their understanding and ability to transfer knowledge.
- **Other evidence** – Includes traditional quizzes, tests, observations, and work samples.



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Use assessments to ensure learners have developed an understanding of the topic at hand. This framework outlining the six facets of understanding can help determine where learners excel and where learners struggle:

- 1 Learners can explain concepts, principles, and processes by putting them into their own words. They can teach it to others, justify their answers, and show their reasoning.
- 2 Learners can interpret by making sense of data, text, and experience through images, analogies, stories, and models.
- 3 They can apply themselves by effectively using and adapting what they know in new and complex contexts.
- 4 Learners can demonstrate the big picture and recognize different points of view.
- 5 They can display empathy by perceiving sensitively and walking in someone else's shoes.
- 6 Learners can display self-knowledge by showing metacognitive awareness, using productive habits of mind, and reflecting on the meaning of the learning and experience.

The understanding by design (UbD) process, an example of backward design, outlines the importance of looking at outcomes to design curriculum units, assessments, and instruction. There are three steps within the process:

## Step 1 – Identify Desired Results

- What are the established content standards and curriculum expectations?
- What content will be a priority for students?
- What content can teachers remove if there is not enough time within the term?
- What are the long-term performance goals for your students?
- What's the most important concept for students to learn?
- What skills should students have after the class?



## Step 2 – Determine Assessment Evidence

- Which type of assessments will you use to assess understanding?
- Which facets of understanding will you address with each assessment?
- How will you ensure you have met the desired results identified in step one?

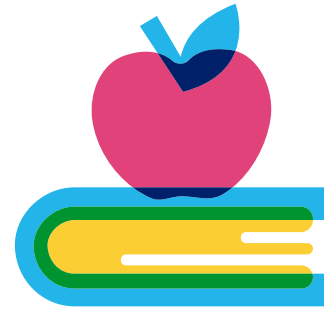
## Step 3 – Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

- How will you address the three types of learning goals: transfer, meaning-making, and acquisition?
- How will you extend lessons beyond presenting information and modeling basic skills to help students make meaning and transfer their learning?
- How will you give your students numerous opportunities to draw inferences and make generalizations?
- How will you support your students in the learning process?
- How will you give your students timely feedback on their performance?

## Quality Curriculum Maps

When your curriculum maps are complete, look for the following to ensure that they are of the highest quality possible:

- Clearly articulated teaching material and assessments
- Clearly outlined options for differentiated learning
- Assessments linked to skills and content
- Easily understood language and terminology
- A reader can understand the map without the writer explaining it



## CHAPTER #3:

# Reviewing Curriculum Maps

## What Should You Review?

After you create the curriculum map, it can become more difficult to change the scope or sequence of a class. What and when teachers will teach remains fairly static unless you identify a major inconsistency. The curriculum map review will focus on adding depth and breadth to each unit.

There is a significant difference between changing the scope and sequence and changing the units of instruction. **Unless the standards vary significantly, we recommend that the scope and sequence remain the same.** If teachers need more time for specific sections, adjusting the estimated timelines for content is acceptable. Try to keep the order of instruction and overall learning targets consistent.

## Curriculum Maps Should Reflect the Best Ways to Teach

When done correctly, curriculum maps will become a living repository of the best way to teach the course. Curriculum maps are a place to put different teaching strategies and make notes of the strategies that worked best in a specific course offering. Collaborating on a curriculum map involves adding all the options and finding what works best given a particular situation.

## Curriculum maps will become a living repository of the best way to teach the course.

As the group of students changes every year, the perfect teaching strategy will also change. As a result, curriculum maps will never tell teachers how to teach particular content. Instead, they suggest various approaches to teaching the content and allow each teacher to use the best strategy they think will work best.

## Maps Are Not the Ultimate Goal of Curriculum Mapping

Curriculum maps are never considered "done." **The goal of curriculum mapping is the mapping process itself, and the maps are a valuable by-product.** Curriculum maps are records of implemented instruction—what teachers have taught during the current school year. Use these maps to create projections for the next year, which plan what teachers will cover in the future.



Education is dynamic since learning, and learning about learning, is in continual motion. Teachers will have new students, classes, and school years each year. Newly-designed, revised, and replaced learning and teaching evidence in curriculum maps provides a school or district's ongoing curriculum.

## Consider involving other key stakeholders in your curriculum review process.

The curriculum review process can allow educators, families, and other stakeholders to express their concerns. Make changes based on their responses. As a result, this new curriculum will directly respond to the students' needs.

## Reviewing Curriculum Maps

The difference between traditional curriculum development and curriculum mapping is the heavy focus on review in curriculum mapping. If possible, update curriculum maps throughout each class and review before every school year.

Your team can review curriculum maps to ensure they meet critical criteria regularly. This reviewing cadence allows the team to adjust curriculum maps as necessary. We recommend doing this before the beginning of every school year.





## Curriculum Map Review Process

Reviewing curriculum maps is an 8-step process:

- 1 Data collection** – Using curriculum maps throughout each class, teachers add notes about what material they actually taught during the term.
- 2 A review of all maps by all teachers** – Each teacher reads the entire grade-level, discipline, or school-wide map as an editor. Each teacher can also consider how easy it is to follow along and read the map.
- 3 Small group review** – A meeting with five to eight faculty members of diverse grade levels and departments. This meeting lasts 60-90 minutes, and the goals are to share findings and record questions based on the first read-through. Small groups help teachers feel less isolated and more engaged in a professional learning community (PLC).
- 4 Additional first read-throughs and small group reviews** – Repeat read-throughs and small group reviews and make edits as necessary. Change the members of the small groups to encourage new insights. Repeat until a small group review determines that there are no more necessary changes.
- 5 Large group review** – The entire faculty comes together to review the work from previous steps, facilitated by leadership team members. This meeting could last 90-120 minutes. Focus on ensuring that each teacher can read the map and address gaps in the curriculum.
- 6 Identifying immediate revision points** – Identify critical curriculum map issues that are not easy to solve with minor editing. Create a timetable to resolve these points and appoint the appropriate teacher or administrator to make the relevant changes. Implement these revision points before using the curriculum map again.
- 7 Identifying points requiring additional research and planning** – Identify less critical or complex curriculum map issues. As above, create a timetable to resolve these points and appoint the appropriate teacher or administrator to make the relevant changes. The timeline for resolving these issues may be longer and require the entire district's support. Try to resolve these issues before the next review cycle and implement those changes into next year's curriculum maps.
- 8 Planning for the next review cycle** – Add any identified curriculum map issues to the next review cycle's agenda. Address immediate revision points. Reprioritize other curriculum map issues you have not yet addressed. Work with your team to identify whether this is still a relevant issue.

These review steps can help determine areas for immediate revision and long-term planning. Consider the following questions when reviewing your curriculum maps:

- Are we satisfied with the covered skills and knowledge?
- Do they reflect what we believe our students need for success?
- Do we assess what we value?
- Do we use a variety of assessments, ranging in difficulty?
- Can we identify areas that need smoother coordination for student learning?
- Is the curriculum map easy to read and follow from an outsider's perspective?
- Is it clear that teachers know how to utilize each map component in the planning process?

## Common Problems

Here are some common problems you may face when developing curriculum maps and some tips for addressing them:

- **There is no clear link between standards and assessments** – Ensure that each assessment is linked back to relevant standards in your curriculum map by identifying which standards you will assess. Assess each standard in some way to ensure that your students meet expectations. Each assessment may test at least one standard. Otherwise, it may not be necessary.
- **Different subjects at different levels of curriculum mapping** – Teachers may prefer different types of curriculum maps for personal use. Teachers can use them in addition to the school-chosen standard curriculum format. Simultaneously mapping all subjects at all grade levels is ideal, but this is not always feasible. We recommend going through the entire process with one map first. This strategy can provide valuable insights to use on your next map. Then create at least one basic curriculum map for all subjects before moving on to more robust curriculum maps.
- **Teachers don't use maps** – Utilize software that incorporates curriculum maps directly into your teachers' workflows. Motivate teachers to use the curriculum maps and to become involved in the process.
- **Trying to do too much at once** – Utilize your team and school to help you create great curriculum maps. The entire curriculum mapping process may take several years to perfect, with a continual review of your maps to ensure they meet your school's needs. Construct maps by following a clearly outlined process like the UbD stages outlined earlier rather than jumping ahead to lesson plans before determining fundamental priorities.

## CHAPTER #4:

# Approving Curriculum Map Changes

Teachers or other school community members may suggest changes after reviewing each curriculum map. Keep in mind how these changes will affect the next offering of the class before making them or creating an entirely new course.

Your goal is to develop instructional practices and strategies for differentiated, innovative, and effective teaching and learning based on the adopted curriculum standards and school goals. Review standards regularly to stay current.

Departments may be interested in exploring the following topics as they update their curriculum maps:

- Use of blended learning or online instruction
- Creative and efficient ways to engage students in the process of acquiring knowledge—including team teaching, interdisciplinary exchanges, international components, and synchronous or asynchronous virtual delivery
- Links with the community
- Collaborating with another department or teacher
- Offering graduating students the option of a capstone project, like a research project, thesis, or community engagement
- Providing experiential learning opportunities like internships, teaching assistantships, and more

It's helpful for each department to identify any changes that may result in overlapping with another department or any additional resources necessary to add these changes into the curriculum.

## Levels of Approval

First, consider the type of proposed changes. You can likely handle small changes to curriculum maps at the department or school level. The department head can approve editorial changes, like modifying the text in a section to make it easier to understand.

More extensive proposed changes may require approval at a district level to maintain horizontal alignment. Evaluate any new course offering at the district level. This evaluation helps avoid redundancies in the curriculum, while offering other schools the opportunity to add this new course to their school.

Make decisions to purchase and use instructional resources and materials at the school or district level. Determine the resources and strategies for instruction to support student needs and interests at the school or district level.

## Teacher Training

If you're making significant changes to the curriculum, it's crucial to provide sufficient professional development for teachers. If possible, provide professional development before the next school year. Otherwise, allocate time for professional development sessions throughout the school year.

In your training plan, include:

- Learning sessions for teachers at the school and district level
- Webinars, videos, and input from district-level teams on best practices
- Extra time throughout the school year to collaborate on training for teachers
- Additional professional development days for a sufficient introduction to the new curriculum



Learn how a Director of Learning & Teaching launched engaging teacher training with the help of PowerSchool.

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## CHAPTER #5:

# Assembling a Team

As we saw in the previous chapter, creating a curriculum map requires great effort. You'll need to involve various people within your school community to develop complete curriculum maps.

## Professional Learning Community

Consider creating a PLC to champion your curriculum maps. Highlighting how each stakeholder's involvement will benefit themselves and the community as a whole is a great way to get buy-in for a project of this scale that will impact everyone whether they're directly involved or not.



Your curriculum mapping leadership team includes PLC members, teachers interested in curriculum renewal, teachers from various grades and departments, at least one administrator, and a member of your technical support team. **Identifying the leadership team and ensuring they understand and support the curriculum mapping process is important.** They maintain a focus on student-centered goals through the review process. The leadership team will need to answer questions and provide feedback for teachers so they can become experts on the school's curriculum and address teachers' needs.

Beyond the leadership team, many other people in your school will contribute to the curriculum mapping process:

- **Administrators** – Their role is to motivate the school consistently. Administrators will include curriculum mapping in school plans and policies, making connections between the mapping and other initiatives, addressing any obstacles, and collecting data to conduct teacher-based discussions and make curriculum decisions.
- **Technical Support** – You may need to use different software tools to create the curriculum maps or need to know if certain activities are possible given the technology available within the classroom.
- **Teachers** – Your teachers will both create and use the curriculum maps. It's essential to involve them throughout the process to ensure that what you are creating actually meets their needs. Each teacher can provide feedback to their peers as well as receive feedback. They will use the curriculum maps for horizontal and vertical alignment and professional development. They use curriculum maps to identify how to develop instructional content and skills from year to year.





## Project Management Tips

- **Communication** – Each group mentioned in the previous section will have different communication requirements. We recommend asking each group for their preferred contact method (email, phone, etc.) and the required level of detail. Then, create separate communication plans and timelines for each group involved in the curriculum mapping process.
- **Budget management** – The curriculum mapping process will require some form of budget, even just in the form of work hours from your team. You may also use a software tool to help with curriculum mapping. Estimate your costs based on the budget for the last curriculum development process or a similar-sized project that your school completed.
- **Time management** – You will need to ensure that your schedule accounts for each team member to do their work. Some activities will depend on others, making this process more nuanced. It is important to identify who needs to complete what to create your curriculum maps, approximately how long each action item will take, and the order of completion.
- **Scope management** – Make sure that your entire team knows what type of curriculum map you plan to create and how robust the maps will be. You don't want to be caught in a situation when an administrator expects more detail in the curriculum maps, which prevents them from on-time completion. Be clear about the scope of your curriculum maps from the very beginning.

## Keeping Your Team Motivated

Curriculum mapping can be a long process, which is why many schools revisit their curriculum after years of use. However, we encourage you to review your curriculum maps yearly to keep up with changing standards, teaching methods, and world events. This review helps ensure that your students receive the best education possible in your school.

As you may know, this process is not easy and can take away teaching time. So how do you convince your team that this is something to do often? Consider sharing the following benefits with your team:

- Once you create a curriculum map, modifying it the following year becomes much more manageable.
- Using technology for your curriculum mapping process saves significant time and makes your maps easy to share with all teachers.
- Revisiting your curriculum maps allows you to better prepare for and learn from standardized testing results.
- Doing your curriculum mapping helps to increase student learning beyond the textbook.

## Going One Step Further

Once curriculum mapping becomes standard practice in your school or district, you can update content yearly to reflect the updated standards. Teachers can include additional resources based on current events or recent discoveries. Administrators can refer to current curriculum maps to ensure teachers cover the appropriate standards and content.



## CHAPTER #6:

# Tips & Tricks for Curriculum Mapping

Now that you have a good idea of the steps to build a curriculum map, we hope you're excited to get going! Before getting started, we recommend considering the following questions to understand why your institution is curriculum mapping and what type of maps will serve you best.

- Why are we mapping? Are we mapping for consensus, essential, or diary maps?
- How does mapping relate to our school improvement plans and initiatives?
- Who initiated mapping in our district?
- Who are the lead map makers in our school?
- What are the obstacles or constraints of mapping in our school?
- How are we going to introduce the curriculum mapping process?
- What professional development and support do we need?
- Do our maps contain accurate data?
- What do we do when we identify areas of need or concern?
- How can we keep the process simple and purposeful?
- How do we keep communication open and transparent?
- How do we celebrate successes along the way?
- How do we support teachers, administration, and the process?
- How can we access technology to assist us?
- How will we use maps as part of our everyday work?
- How do we use data to make informed curriculum decisions?
- How will we support the next cycle of mapping?

Once you have got the handle on these questions, check out these links to template and sample curriculum maps that you can use and modify to what works best for your school:

**Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education**

**Model Curriculum Maps**

**Texas Education Agency**

**STAAR Alternate 2 TEKS Curriculum Framework Documents**

# Leveraging Open Education Resources

Schools often use hardcover texts year after year, which can result in many becoming outdated. Additionally, digital textbooks may cost as much or more than physical textbooks. A dynamic curriculum process that leverages open education resources (OER) can alleviate costs and adapt to evolving student needs.

## Why Do We Use Textbooks?

Textbooks are a great resource. Whenever teachers or students aren't sure they have the correct answer, they can refer to their textbook. Teachers can easily assign daily homework by giving students a few pages of the textbook to read. Administrators can quickly check which textbook pages will be covered in each teacher's lesson plan to ensure they are on track. Going without textbooks is a risk that many educators do not feel ready to take. Textbooks provide teachers with some compelling benefits, including:

- Supplying reading passages, questions, and projects for students
- Organizing the class material to maintain a steady course
- Making it easy for colleagues teaching the same classes to stay on the same page

Textbooks in and of themselves are not "bad" or "good." However, over-reliance on textbooks makes the book the expert, not the teacher. Ideally, the textbook functions as a base, not the driver behind the conversation or the information if teachers use it.

Students learn better when they take an active role in finding and choosing texts, asking their questions, and creating their projects. This approach may mean learning directly from primary sources rather than textbooks. Students can go beyond basic level learning through project-based, performance-based, and gaming-based assessments that go well beyond the textbook's range.

Limiting the use of textbooks can increase student engagement. Using textbooks less also allows teachers to only present information to the class that is current and relevant.



# The Effect of Technology

Tablets and computers allow teachers and students to download textbooks as PDFs directly to their devices. This access has a substantial positive environmental impact as paper textbooks become increasingly rare in the classroom.

There are many benefits of bringing technology into the curriculum. Many education online resources:

- Are updated in real-time to reflect the most current scholarship, thinking, argument, and debate as it happens
- Are manageable through contemporary mobile modes of communication and organization
- Reflect on new media as fundamental to the classroom experience
- Are available for free or at minimal cost to teachers and students
- Can be easily added or removed without significantly affecting the curriculum



## CHAPTER #7:

# The Future of Curriculum Mapping

To meet the changing technological needs of students, districts and schools have accelerated their investments in edtech and adopted new strategies to advance student learning.

Online classrooms allow classes to connect in virtual spaces. Learning tools streamline everything from instruction to assessment. Engagement platforms ensure learning is fun. These approaches are becoming more mainstream and will continue to persist into the foreseeable future.

These technology trends also impact how teachers, support staff and administrators map their curriculum. In this chapter, we explore the trends that influence the future of curriculum mapping and how you can embrace it within your district or school.

## Hybrid Learning Is Here to Stay

Face-to-face learning—the kind you’ll find in a traditional classroom—is powerful at facilitating social connection, non-verbal communication cues, and real-time interactions. That includes classroom staples like discussions and immediate feedback. Yet, it requires students to physically attend class, no matter what learning activities students will engage in that day.

Virtual learning—which relies wholly on technology to deliver and access—excels in individualized exploration, independent tasks, and self-paced practice. It allows students greater access during times they may otherwise be absent. It also provides more opportunities and formats for collaboration between students. However, virtual learning can limit the community relationships students and teachers form and may invite unwanted distractions into the school day.

**Hybrid learning** integrates the best of both worlds while minimizing the drawbacks associated with each approach. For example, teachers may reserve in-classroom learning for activities, assignments that require group work, and in-depth discussion. Students can do tasks independently, like reading, practice, and asynchronous discussion. Teachers may move those independent tasks online to provide a better learning experience and make better use of in-class time.

In short, hybrid learning allows learning objectives and student needs to drive the instruction format. And it's becoming more common in K-12 schools. In a recent report, 20 percent of U.S. school districts say they have already adopted, plan to adopt, or are considering adopting virtual elements into their educational portfolio.<sup>1</sup>

## Curriculum Mapping Tip

The curriculum mapping process is the perfect time to determine which elements of your curriculum best fit online and face-to-face delivery. Start by asking questions like:

- What learning objectives are best suited for online learning or face-to-face learning?
- Can students do this work individually, or will they need to collaborate?
- How will the work completed in each format complement and build upon each other?

## Curriculum Sharing Is In-Demand

Gone are the days when curriculums were designed in personal teacher diaries or hidden away in three-ring binders on dusty shelves. With the growth of **collaboration-enabling technology**, like Unified Classroom<sup>®</sup> Curriculum and Instruction, teachers can review and compare maps to see what's working and what's missing. Doing so allows them to find opportunities for cross-disciplinary connections and transitions between grade levels to make sure students master each standard.

However, this collaboration process goes beyond teachers, support staff, and administrators. States increasingly require schools to make information like syllabi, textbooks, resources, standards, and curriculums publicly accessible online, so parents and other educational stakeholders have access. As a result, schools in those areas will now need to consider more effective ways of digitally building and sharing their curriculum maps.

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<sup>1</sup> Schwartz, Heather L., et al. "Remote Learning Is Here to Stay: Results from the First American School District Panel Survey." RAND Corporation, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.7249/rra956-1>.

## Curriculum Mapping Tip

By mapping your curriculum on a digital-first platform, curriculum sharing is easier than ever. As one Curriculum and Instruction user says:

"Once our curriculum maps are where we want them to be, we plan to publish them within the district as well as provide parental access to promote transparency and encourage family engagement...by being intentional with our curriculum work and including all stakeholders in this process, we expect that we'll continue to earn strong graduation readiness scores and maintain our high graduation rate."<sup>2</sup>

## The Future Is Flexible

Technology enables us to access information whenever and wherever we want. It empowers us to pick up where we left off, connect with others across distance and time, and create new experiences that benefit students on a more personalized level. That's the flexibility entering our classrooms through adopting new edtech solutions.

In many flexible schools:

- Students can choose their preferred methods of learning and take a more participatory role in defining their educational journey.
- Teachers and students can respond to disruptions in learning, whether it's a sick day, a weather event, or a global pandemic.
- There's consistency and continuity to ensure a high quality of learning, whether students are learning from a seasoned teacher or a teacher who's new to the classroom.
- Teachers can adjust their strategies iteratively and build their curriculums as living, breathing documents.
- Adaptable infrastructure keeps up with future advancements in education technology, whatever they may be.

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<sup>2</sup> "Improving Curriculum Mapping through Collaboration, Stakeholder Voice and Resources." Getting Smart, 10 Apr. 2020, [www.gettingsmart.com/2020/04/10/improving-curriculum-mapping-through-collaboration-stakeholder-voice-and-resources](http://www.gettingsmart.com/2020/04/10/improving-curriculum-mapping-through-collaboration-stakeholder-voice-and-resources).



## Curriculum Mapping Tip

Curriculum mapping on a platform like PowerSchool Unified Classroom® Curriculum and Instruction provides a strong foundation of flexibility. It allows teachers to measure, review and adjust what's working within their classrooms and what's not in real-time. It's also an excellent way to maintain continuity during unexpected changes in the classroom and keep all stakeholders in the loop to ensure student learning stays on track.

## Bring Your Curriculum Mapping Into The Future

The future of curriculum mapping may have arrived faster than expected, but now that we're here, there's no turning back! With hybrid learning, curriculum-sharing, and flexibility emerging as leading trends within schools across the globe, teachers and students both benefit from the shifts in strategy, scale, and scope that ever-advancing edtech solutions can provide.

# Conclusion

Congratulations! You now understand the fundamentals of curriculum mapping and how current trends impact the future of curriculum mapping. Curriculum mapping is crucial to ensuring that your school's curriculum aligns with standards and flows consistently from year to year.

This process requires involvement from many representatives within your school or district community. Successfully managing the process will improve the level of education at your institution and create a robust method of communicating curriculum goals throughout the community. Throughout this process, work towards establishing a PLC in your school. This community will ensure that curriculum maps are a living document used by every teacher in your school!

The PowerSchool Unified Classroom® team offers a **curriculum mapping tool** that allows you to design learning around your students and standards in a more customized, connected, and collaborative way. We've made it even easier for you by uploading state and Common Core standards directly into the platform and providing new tools to track student progress. On top of that, we're helping several districts around the U. S. globally leverage data to make better decisions—and stronger curriculums.



Here are a few more resources you can explore for your school.

[LEARN MORE](#)





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