

Aligning the Recommended and the Written Curricula

Aligning the recommended and the written curricula is primarily the responsibility of the task force assigned to develop the curriculum in a given subject area. However, the principal can play a role, as explained below.

The extent to which the recommended curriculum should determine the written curriculum varies from subject to subject. Some professional standards, such as those in mathematics, seem to be well formulated and widely approved; they thus can provide a useful guide for the written curriculum. On the other hand, the standards for English language arts (National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association, 1996) have been widely criticized for being too vague and excessively concerned with process; they therefore seem less useful to local developers.

Principals can play an active role in this alignment. If they are members of task forces, they can require the task force to analyze professional and state standards and determine which ones should be used in the district guide. If they are not represented on the task force, they can examine the products to assess whether the recommended curriculum has been given sufficient attention.

Aligning the Written, the Supported, and the Assessed Curricula

The principal should play an active role in working with teachers to align the written, the supported, and the assessed curricula. Because these three types are closely related, the alignment can be accomplished in one project. The following process has worked well with several school systems.

1. *Plan the project.* Appoint a curriculum alignment committee (or use an existing committee) to oversee and coordinate the project. Train the committee in the alignment process as it involves these three types of curriculum. The alignment committee should then train the grade-level teams, who will carry out the alignment tasks for their grade.

2. *Focus the curriculum.* The grade-level teams should carefully analyze the new district curriculum to focus the alignment process on the *mastery objectives*. As the term is used here, the mastery objectives are those that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Will likely be tested or assessed
- Require explicit teaching