



**Curriculum Design, Revision and Evaluation  
Tool and Strategy Kit**

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## #1: Tool - Evaluating Organizing Centers

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An organizing center is communicated through a **unit’s title, essential question and big idea**. A quality curriculum will organize units of study around centers that are worthy of the time and energy set aside for their pursuit, and reflect the overall intent and purpose of the curriculum.

The **unit title** can be a topic, theme, concept, issue, problem, process, or phenomenon (Martin-Kniep, 2000).

The **essential question** is a large, global question that can be explored and contemplated, elicit multiple perspectives and does not require one correct answer. It provides the context and direction for the unit. It poses the focus of exploration as it relates to the unit title and in some cases serves as the title itself.

The **central or big idea** is a statement that identifies the most important learning of the unit in a clear and concise manner. Often it articulates a generalization related to the essential question and serves as the connector between the essential question and the unit title.

Titles: List the title of the units here:	Unit Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify any essential questions and big ideas</li> <li>Describe what students will learn or do during the unit.</li> </ul>
Unit One:	
Unit Two:	
Unit Three:	
Unit Four:	
Unit Five:	
Unit Six:	

Once you have identified the above information you can use it to answer the following questions and evaluate the organizing centers for the curriculum:

- What is the reoccurring organizing center used for each unit of study – topic, theme, concept, issue, problem, process, or phenomenon?
- How are the organizing centers articulated within the curriculum– title only, title and essential question or title, essential question and big idea?
- How do the organizing centers align to the values and foci of the school as articulated through the school’s mission and vision statement, and/or the process and content standards, learning processes, dispositions and habits of mind that are used to guide instruction?
- How do the organizing centers support student learning by creating appeal and then engaging students in meaningful, purposeful and authentic experiences?



## #2: Tool - Determining Alignment in a Curriculum

**Strong Alignment:** The task clearly aligns to the standard, the task and the standard are almost one and the same; it addresses all parts and honors the intent of the standard.

**Moderate Alignment:** The task addresses the standard; the standard is part of the task but is not the primary focus.

**Weak Alignment:** The task touches on the standard; it may occur but is not guaranteed to be part of the task.

When evaluating curriculum one way to check for strong alignment is to choose sample tasks from various units and determine the degree of alignment between the task and the standard identified using the scale of weak, moderate and strong as previously described. The tasks you choose to evaluate should represent those found in daily lessons, extended activities, and assessments. This tool is helpful for gathering and evaluating this information. An example has been included to illustrate the process.

Task Description:	Standard:	Degree of Alignment:	Notes for Revision:
Students read several documents related to the events that occurred in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963, including Dr. Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” and a reprinted newspaper article from <i>The New York Times</i> in 1963. As they read the texts, they work with different colored highlighters to show how the texts address the event in a similar fashion and any disconnect amongst the texts.	RI.9/10.9 Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>include an additional reading such as “Ballad of Birmingham” by Dudley Randall</li> <li>provide opportunity for discussion on the ways the text describe the same event, the reasons for the differences in their descriptions, and the impact on student understanding of the events of Birmingham as a result of reading the different accounts.</li> </ul>
<i>Task #1:</i>			
<i>Task #2:</i>			



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### **#3: Strategy - Identifying Standards that are Taught and Assessed**

It is not enough to make the claim that if a standard is listed in a unit of study, it is sufficiently emphasized throughout the unit. Standards that are addressed, taught, and taught and assessed may all be included in one unit.

A high-quality curriculum document will communicate the difference between these standards or include only those that are taught and assessed allowing teachers to make purposeful decisions about what to teach, how to teach it and to share learning targets with their students. Students should be given the opportunity to practice the skills embedded in the standards and receive guidance and feedback from their teachers before being assessed.

#1: Prioritize the standards by clearly identifying and labeling those standards that are taught and assessed, and/or distinguishing them from those that are addressed. For existing or published curriculums, this may mean reviewing existing tasks to determine which standards are truly being taught and assessed.

#2: Code the standard into the curriculum document and create a unit blueprint.

**#4: Tool - Standards-Analysis Documents**

Standards-Analysis Document #1: This standard-analysis document is especially helpful when planning a curriculum or documenting the placement of standards as the curriculum is being developed.

Reading Literature	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.						
RL.5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.						
RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).						
RL.5.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.						
RL.5.5 Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.						
RL.5.6 Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.						
RL.5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).						
(RL.5.8 not applicable to literature)						
RL.5.9 Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.						

Standards-Analysis Document #2: The standards-analysis document shows the same relationships but condenses the data to one page. This document is particularly useful for analyzing a curriculum to make revisions or it can be used as a quick reference tool when designing units of study.

Standard	Reading Literature	Reading Information	Writing	Speaking and Listening	Language
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Numbers represent the grade level standard. The maximum number of standards found in a given strand of the CCSS is 10. Not all strands have 10 standards. An X indicates that the standard does not exist.

The standards analysis document can be analyzed using the following questions:

1. What standards are emphasized? Why?
2. Where are there gaps or standards that are under-emphasized? Why?
3. What additional questions does this data generate?
4. What revisions need to be made to create a balanced and spiraled curriculum?

Additional factors to consider when determining standards placement:

- overall intent of the standards
- grade-level focus standards
- gradual-release of responsibility
- developmentally appropriate practice

## #5: Tool - Assessment Types and Moments

Teachers use four different types of assessments to determine what students know, are able to do and value. They include

- **Information recall** require students to identify or provide the correct answer
- **Product assessments** are comprised of assessments that result in the creation of a tangible product.
- **Demonstrations**, sometimes called performance assessments, require students to do something and include behaviors observable by the teacher.
- A **process assessment** comes in the form of a product or demonstration but focuses on metacognition, asking students to reflect on their thinking and processes.

Assessments serve three purposes; diagnostic, formative and summative.

- **Diagnostic assessments** determine what students know and are able to do, as well as identify student misconceptions. They are used to determine the starting point for instruction and as a baseline for determining growth.
- **Formative assessments** are checks for understanding. They occur while learning is still taking place and provide teachers with opportunities to provide students with descriptive feedback and modify instruction based on student need.
- **Summative assessments** are used to determine what students have learned, and are the final assessment in a learning cycle. Information recall, product, demonstration and process assessments can all be used for these different purposes.

An efficient way in which to evaluate the assessments, is to create a simple list in which you identify the type and purpose of each.

	Assessment Description	Type *	Purpose **	Standards
Unit One: Early Man and the Birth of Civilizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit Test</li> <li>• Essay question, where did civilization begin?</li> </ul>	IR PD	S	9.1 a- d 9.4 b
Unit Two: Ancient Western Civilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit Test</li> </ul>	IR	S	9.1a, b, d 9.2a, b 9.3a 9.4b, e
Unit Three: Ancient Eastern Civilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit Test</li> <li>• Essay: How did the Silk Road contribute to cultural diffusion?</li> </ul>	IR PD	S	9.1c – d 9.2b 9.3b 9.4b – c



Unit Four: Middle Ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit Test</li> <li>• Project: Students choose one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- create a cause and effect chart showing the reasons why feudalism developed and its consequences.</li> <li>- role play the various ranking/hierarchy of feudal society and church society</li> <li>- find examples of various types of art and architecture of the Middle Ages and explain how each reflects the cultural values of the time period</li> <li>- read and summarize a primary and secondary source text that illustrate the abusive power and corruption in society/Church during the Middle Age</li> <li>- identify and rank the reasons why people joined the crusades</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	IR PD D	S	9.4e 9.5c, d, f, g 9.6a, d
Unit Five: East Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit Test</li> </ul>	IR	S	9.3a – c 9.4b, d 9.5a, b, d 9.6a
Unit Six: Early Modern Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit Test</li> <li>• DBQ: What was the impact of the European renaissance?</li> </ul>	IR PD	S	9.4b – d 9.6b - d
Unit Seven: Age of Globalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit Test</li> <li>• DBQ: Did the age of exploration change the world for the better?</li> </ul>	IR PD	S	9.2b 9.3a 9.4d 9.5d 9.7a, c, d, f 9.8c, d

\*Types: IR - Information Recall, PD – Product, D – Demonstration, PR –Process

\*\*Purpose: D – diagnostic, F – formative, S – summative

The data collected can then be analyzed using a series of guiding questions. The first set of guiding questions focus on the types of assessments.

1. *What types of assessments are used to determine student understanding?*
2. *Is there an overreliance on one type and/or are any assessments missing?*
3. *Are the types of assessments used congruent with the standards they intend to measure?*
4. *Are multiple measures used when more than one type of assessment can be used to measure the same learning target?*

The following questions can be used for the analysis of purpose:

1. *What assessments moments are identified in the curriculum?*
2. *How are the diagnostic assessments used?*
3. *How are the formative assessments used? Are there opportunities for students to receive feedback from their teachers?*
4. *Are summative assessments designed to produce as well as measure learning?*

## #6: Tool - Quality Performance Tasks

A quality curriculum embedded performance task. This criteria can be used for evaluating performance tasks.

1. measures the most important learning of the unit as articulated through the organizing center - the unit title, essential question and big idea.
2. includes tasks that are congruent with and strongly align to the standards. This means the task includes different modalities reflective of the standards being measured and it meets the criteria for strong alignment; the task and standards are difficult to separate from each other; the task requires students to fully engage in activities that align to all the skills embedded within the standard; and the task honors the intent of the standards.
3. has an authentic audience and purpose. Quality performance tasks have an authentic audience and purpose that go beyond the teacher and classroom. They are designed to help students interact with the real world.
4. provides opportunity for teacher feedback and student revision. Quality performance tasks include diagnostic and formative assessments that provide information that the teacher can use to adjust instruction and opportunities for teachers to give students feedback that they can use to revise their work.
5. includes specific criteria for student performance. The task outlines the criteria that will be used for evaluation, and has corresponding rubrics and checklists that can be used for instruction and feedback purposes as well as evaluation.

This criteria can be used for designing and evaluating rubrics:

- *Aligned to the standards*
- *Descriptors are written in terms of what is evident rather than what is missing.* Often rubrics are filled with language describing what students cannot do and unfortunately these descriptions are found in the lower levels of the rubric where students are struggling the most. Focusing on what is missing does not provide students with the guidance they need to improve their work. Focusing on what is evident helps students to find themselves on the rubric, and provides information on what they need to do to move from one level to the next.
- *Descriptors avoid subject, value-laden, quantitative language.* Another common error found in rubrics is that they are filled with subjective, value-laden language such as some, most, consistently, good, accurate. These words, once again, do not provide enough information for students so they can make improvements in their work. They are left wondering such things as how do you consistently use reasons and facts to support an opinion?
- *The rubric is written in language that is accessible to students and reflective of classroom practice.* A rubric that can be used as an instructional tool should be written in a language that students understand. The grade level of the students and the language used in the classroom should be considered when evaluating or creating a rubric that students will reference throughout the unit as they work on completing the performance task.

## #8: Tool - Performance Task Evaluation Tool

This chart is an easy tool for evaluating the assessments found in the curriculum. It uses a scale of 1 – 5 to answer questions related to the criteria for performance tasks and then based on those answers, make a decisions about what performance tasks need to be revised or replaced.

	Scale of 1 – 5 1 – representing not at all; 5 representing exemplary					
Unit Title and Assessment Description	Does the task measure the most important learning of the unit?	Is the assessment congruent with and strongly aligned to the standards?	Does the assessment have an authentic audience and purpose?	Does the task incorporate diagnostic and formative assessments?	Do the assessments have rubrics and checklists that can be used for both instruction and evaluation?	Revise or Replace
Research a modern day issue and write a story, or play, in the style of the horror/gothic genre, to discuss an issue of concern in modern day society.	3	3	1	2	1	Revise

Questions for analysis:

- *How well does the task measure the most important learning of the unit as articulated through the organizing center?*
- *Is the assessment congruent with and strongly aligned to the standards?*
- *Does the assessment have an authentic audience and purpose?*
- *How does the task incorporate diagnostic and formative assessments?*
- *Do the assessments have rubrics and checklists that can be used for both instruction and evaluation?*



## #9: Strategy - Coding and Labeling Learning Experiences and Lessons

A quality curriculum will contain information for daily lessons that describes what students will do, why they will do it, and what evidence the teacher will have of student learning.

The following codes can be used to identify

- **what the students will do**
- *why the student will do it*
- the evidence of learning

The types of learning experiences included in a curriculum are driven by the types of standards included in the unit.

**Content learning experiences** focus on the “what”. They primarily align to discipline specific content or conceptual understandings.

**Process learning experiences** focus on the “how”. They align to process standards that describe how the students will engage with the content i.e. synthesize, analyze, comprehend; follow steps in a procedure i.e. lab experiment or design protocol; or communicate what they have learned i.e. speaking or writing.

**Disposition or metacognitive learning experiences** focus on student thinking. The term metacognition simply put means “thinking about thinking.” Just as we know students need to be taught content and skills, students also need time to develop their ability to reflect and think about their thinking.

The identification of type of learning experience is included in tool #7.

## #11: Tool - Types of Learning Experiences

This tool can be used to analyze a series of learning experiences or lessons within a curriculum. The example illustrates how coding and labeling can be used when examining or creating learning experiences. Standards are listed at the end of each learning experience to demonstrate the alignment between the task and standard.

Learning Experiences:	Type
<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>find and list <u>examples</u> of internal (genetic) and external (nutrition, physical activity, mental health, environmental exposure) factors that influence homeostasis; <u>identifying and labeling those that can be controlled and those that cannot.</u> 5.3b</b></li> <li>• <b><u>conduct and write a lab report of an experiment that examines the body's response (breathing rate and pulse) to changes in physical activity.</u> 5.3b</b></li> <li>• <b>view examples of feedback loops and explanations that illustrate the relationship between external factors and homeostasis; in small groups <u>discuss how the written information has been translated into feedback loops.</u> 5.3b, RST.9-10.7</b></li> <li>• <b>create a <u>class definition of negative and positive feedback</u> based on their examination of the samples and explanations. They <u>color-code the positive and negative feedback</u> in each of the examples. 5.3b, RST.9-10.7</b></li> <li>• <b>complete a <u>written response in which they reflect on how the use of a feedback loop impacted their understanding of homeostasis and include remaining questions.</u> 5.3b, RST.9-10.7</b></li> <li>• <b>work in groups to <u>draw a diagram that shows the feedback loop</u> examined during their experiment; <u>color code the negative and positive feedback</u> within the system. 5.3b, RST.9-10.7</b></li> </ul>	<p>Content</p> <p>Content</p> <p>Process/Content</p> <p>Process/Content</p> <p>Disposition/ Process</p> <p>Process/Content</p>



1. Text should be chosen for the curriculum based on the purpose or purposes they serve. This could mean that the same text is read for multiple reasons or that students read multiple texts at the same time because the purpose for reading is different. In some cases it is not always necessary to specifically identify a text. The curriculum can offer a selection of texts that meet the same criteria or describe criteria so students can select their own.
2. The guiding principle for determining what technology to include in the curriculum is to focus on the result and not the device itself. In general, technology is used to access information, collaborate/interact with others and publish/share. The need to identify specific websites and platforms is dependent on student involvement in the task. The more open-ended and involved the students are in the task, such as engaging in a self-selected inquiry-based performance assessment, the less information needs to be included in the curriculum. Specificity is necessary when specific models, exemplars, websites and tools are shared to introduce to an idea or concept, used to practice a specific skill, or evaluated as models.
3. Materials include tangible products such as graphic organizers, models and exemplars, student checklists, primary sources, common templates, and protocols, that are needed to engage in the units learning experiences. As learning experience clearly communicate why students are completing a specific task, the materials identified are selected because students will need them to accomplish the task.
  - a. Is the resource an integral part of a learning experience?
  - b. Does this resource include a process that will be repeated in subsequent units?
  - c. Does this tool support the school values?