

*Seven Steps to Align Your Curriculum
With Standards*

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Introduction

Educators frequently find themselves in the crosshairs of public criticism as standards become the watchwords of education. Success in raising standards is measured in various ways, including performance on tests, graduation rates, and college acceptance rates. Career and technical education students may be asked to meet the industry standards for their occupational areas. However, most often success is measured with objective academic tests of math competency, reading comprehension, and writing skills.

Unfortunately, the burden of responsibility to raise student test scores often falls solely to classroom teachers because they interface with students every day. However, they cannot do it alone. To do the job well, classroom teachers need adequate support from administrators and parents.

Teachers also need adequate professional development and time to understand their student data, align their curriculum with standards, and learn new teaching strategies to meet the standards-based curriculum.

The following seven steps are designed to help teachers align their curriculum to standards. We hope it will be helpful in the ongoing process of ensuring students are learning what is expected of them.

The Seven Steps to Align Curriculum with Standards:

1. Assemble your data.
2. Assemble all standards documents that apply to your curriculum.
3. Explore the data and the standards.
4. Outline your curriculum.
5. Align your curriculum with standards.
6. Determine gaps and revise unit or project outlines.
7. Compare new data to old data to document improvement.

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Directions

Worksheet 1

Step 1 Assemble your data

Collect all the evidence you can find that will help you determine the success of your students. This evidence may include state and national test scores, descriptive data about the school's success, and anecdotal evidence including surveys of student perceptions.

Step 2 Assemble all standards documents that apply to your curriculum

Locate copies of your state academic standards and the SCANS employability skills at the very least. If you teach a career and technical program, locate the standards for your industry or occupation if possible.

Step 3 Explore the data and the standards.

Determine exactly what the measure of success will be for your students. Explore test preparation information provided by the testing agencies. Describe in a few brief sentences what you and your students will be held accountable for. Write these sentences on Worksheet One.

Worksheets 2 and 3: Complete one for each unit or project

Step 4 Outline your curriculum

Determine natural or logical segments of your curriculum (3-6 weeks each). They may be called Units of Study, Projects, Topics, or Themes. Limit Units to 6-10 per school year. Worksheet 2 is for notes, Worksheet 3 for the final description.

For each Unit:

1. Identify 3-4 major goals.
2. Describe the sequence of balanced and integrated activities that allow for different learning styles and reinforce academic and employability skills.
3. Identify the mix of assessment strategies and create a checklist or rubric for each assessment component.
4. Identify the standards being met in this unit.

Worksheet 4: Make additional copies as necessary

Step 5 Align your curriculum with standards

Using the Worksheet 4 matrix, with Unit or Project titles down the left column and standards information across the top (refer to Step 4 information—do not duplicate standards if in more than one unit), indicate which standards are being met by each Unit or Project.

Step 6 Determine gaps and revise Unit or Project outlines.

If any required standards are not being met someplace in the curriculum, consider adding components to a unit, or creating a new unit to address them.

Step 7 Compare new data to old data to document improvement

Over time, continue to explore new data, new test scores, etc. to see how well the curriculum is aligned with the measures of success.

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Worksheet 1

Title of course:

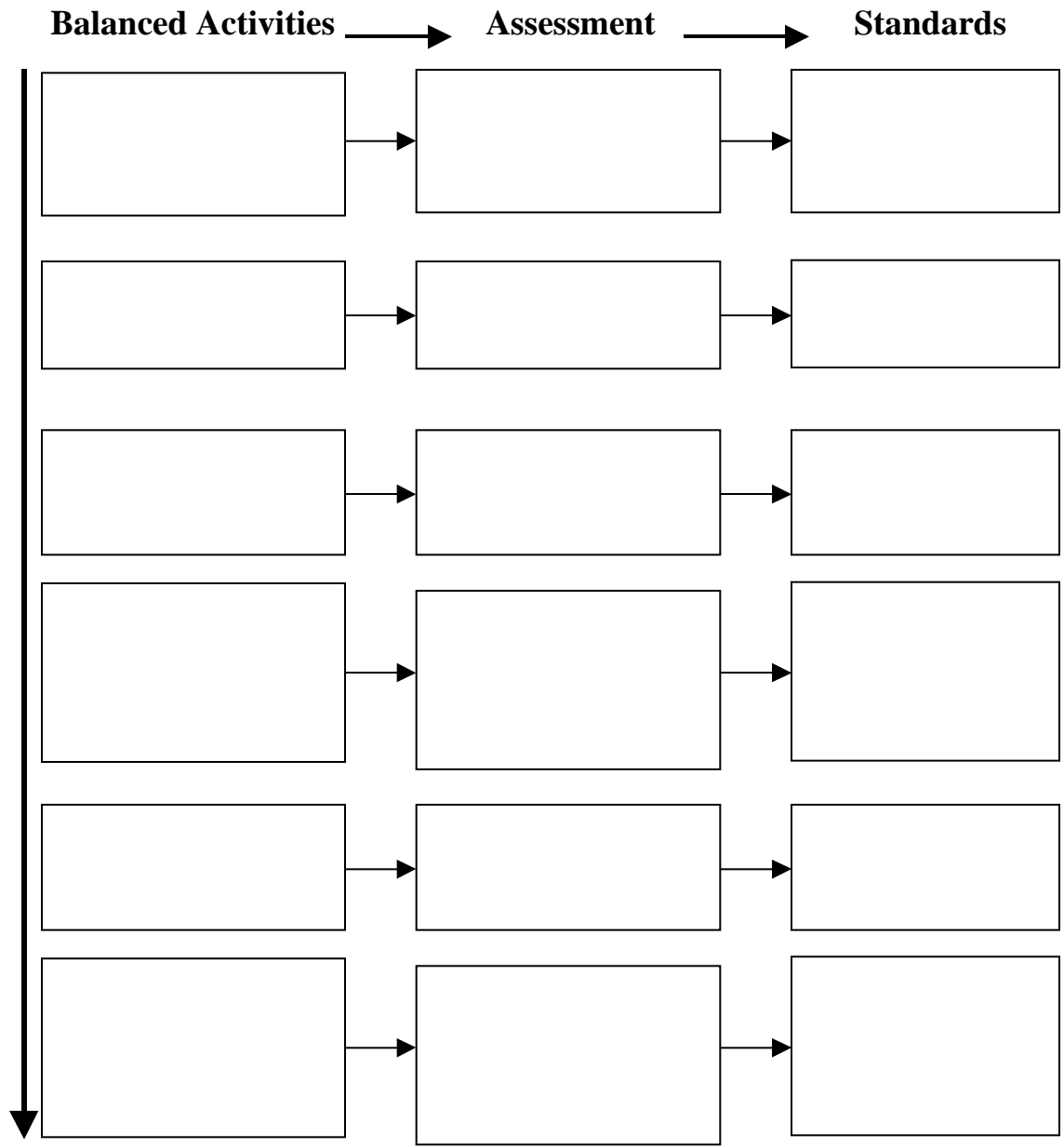
1. The data I will explore includes:

2. The standards I will consider include:

3. The measures of success for my students are:

Unit or Project Outline

Worksheet 2: Template for Notes



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Worksheet 3—Complete one for each Unit or Project

1. Project Team Members:

1. Title of Course:

2. Title of Unit or Project:

3. Approximate length of Unit or Project:

4. Brief description of the Unit or Project with an expected final outcome.

5. Major Goals of Unit or Project:

6. Sequence of balanced and integrated activities for students:

7. Checklist or rubric for each assessment component:

8. Specific Standards addressed by each goal or activity:

Name of Standard
(PA-RWLS)

Title of Individual Standard
(Reading independently)

Ref. #
(1.1.11)

Unit Outline Checklist

To evaluate Worksheet 3

1. Are the Project Team Members identified? _____

2. Is the Course identified clearly? _____

3. Is the title of the Unit or Project descriptive? _____

4. Is the Unit or Project of reasonable length (3-6 weeks) to encourage student involvement in authentic activities? _____

5. Has the Unit or Project been described briefly in a way that would interest students and parents? Is the project based on an issue that matters to students, that provides an opportunity for students to make a difference by their efforts, or has an obvious tie to a real world application. _____

6. Major Goals of Unit:
 - Are the goal statements written with action verbs that show a range of thinking skills from knowledge and comprehension to synthesis and evaluation? _____

 - Do the goals represent large units of real work that stress that students will learn thinking, planning and problem-solving skills part of the project? _____

 - Do the major goals answer the question... “The student will learn how to...” _____

7. Sequence of balanced and integrated activities for students:
 - Are the activities written from the student’s perspective? _____

 - Is there a mix of activities that address the need for students to be actively involved in their learning? _____

 - Is there a mix of activities that allow students to learn technical skills while increasing their academic and employability skills? _____

8. Checklist or rubric for each assessment component:

- Is there a mix of assessment strategies to accommodate various learning styles? —
- Are the requirements for successful completion of each assessment strategy clearly described so students know what it takes to get an A? —

9. Specific Standards addressed in this Unit or Project:

- Have specific standards statements been identified from academic, industry, and employability standards (by name of standard, and/or title of individual standard statement, and reference number)? —
- Can each standard listed be justified by evidence in activities (#7) or the assessment strategies (#8) that it truly is being taught or reinforced in this Unit or Project? —

10. Additional comments or feedback:
