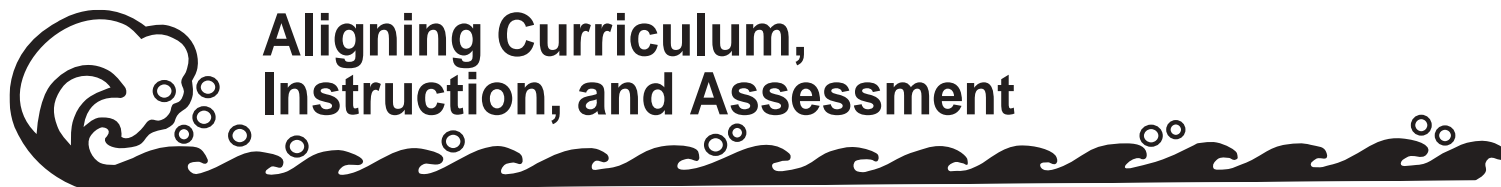


Florida Department of Education  
Office of School Improvement  
“Ride the Wave” to Success in the Classroom



## Aligning Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment is crucial to success in improving instruction. It encourages teachers to focus on high-order, integrated skills, to communicate goals and standards, and to design avenues to help students achieve them.

When curriculum, instruction and assessment are aligned, everyone (students, teachers, parents, administrators, school boards) has a clear method for measuring progress.

Aligning the curriculum with national and state standards precedes coordinating professional development, assessments related to the curriculum, and well-focused instructional strategies. For example, a professional development program that centers on curriculum is also aligned with content and the assessment of student learning.

### **State and Local Alignment**

State and local alignment is the congruence between state curriculum guidelines and locally developed instructional practices. Florida’s tools from the Department of Education, on alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment include:

#### **STATE ALIGNMENT**

##### **Curriculum**

- ◆ Sunshine State Standards
- ◆ Course Descriptions
- ◆ Grade Level Expectations (GLEs)

##### **Instruction**

- ◆ Florida Curriculum Frameworks
- ◆ Connections Training
- ◆ Electronic Curriculum Planning Tool
- ◆ Area Centers for Educational Enhancement Training

##### **Assessment**

- ◆ Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)
- ◆ Teacher-managed assessments

Educators from throughout the state began working in 1994 to develop curriculum frameworks that serve as guides at the local level for development of curriculum and instruction. These frameworks have been completed and disseminated to school districts. Chapter 3 of these curriculum frameworks contains the Sunshine State Standards. Descriptions for selected courses are being constructed with the standards embedded.

The Department offers assistance in the use of these guides by providing instruction to local educators through Connections Training, the Electronic Curriculum Planning Tool and assistance to districts from the Area Centers for Educational Enhancement.

Finally, a comprehensive assessment plan completes the alignment model with statewide assessment, the FCATs, assessing Florida students’ mastery of the Sunshine State Standards.

Local alignment with statewide alignment include a locally developed curriculum that guides classroom instruction and prepares students for assessment by the Sunshine State Standards. In addition, local teacher-managed assessments, based on grade-level standards and expectations that have been clearly identified, locally monitor the instructional process and individual student progress.

#### **LOCAL ALIGNMENT**

##### **Alignment and Effective Schools**

Effective schools correlates indicate that in effective schools:

- ◆ Curriculum and instruction are clearly correlated.
- ◆ There are clear and agreed upon schoolwide goals that form the basis for selecting standards, teaching materials and assessing content.

##### **Aligning Curriculum**

Alignment begins with the written curriculum which guides the decisions made for instruction and the identification of appropriate assessments. Curriculum includes meaningful learning, offers students choices in demonstrating their knowledge and skills, and empowers them to be more responsible for their own education.

Curriculum based on standards-referenced instruction focuses on desired, observable learner behavior produced as the result of instruction. The curriculum planner needs to ask, what do I want learners to become, emphasizing student-oriented planning.

The Florida Sunshine State Standards identify what students should know and be able to do at certain stages throughout PreK-12 grade levels. Districts, schools and classroom teachers then identify what students should know and be able to do at certain grade levels within the broader timeframe.

Standards that are clear, useful, verifiable statements of student learning outcomes contain at least three ingredients. First, they specify the learner; second, they describe an unambiguous and observable action; third, they specify the conditions under which these outcomes will be assessed.

### Questions to ask about the local curriculum:

- ◆ Do teachers understand the state and local goals, and standards, for PreK-12, not just their immediate teaching level?
- ◆ Are resources available to teach these standards?
- ◆ Are the standards stated so that they lead to coherent instructional programs and measurable outcomes?

### Aligning Instruction

When determining instruction, it is more important to plan instructional outcomes than instructional activities. Planning statements focus on student performance and what students are supposed to gain from the instructional activity. Planning instruction focuses on the knowledge, skills and attitudes a student should gain. To facilitate the variety of learning styles students bring to the classroom, instructional activities and materials reflect learning opportunities for multiple styles.

### Questions to ask about instruction:

- ◆ Are instructional materials designed to instruct students in the standards that have been adopted?
- ◆ Are teachers teaching the standards? Are teachers guiding instruction and practice that result in student proficiency of the standards?
- ◆ Is attention being paid to the “what” of teaching as well as the “how?”
- ◆ Do lesson plans reflect the goals and standards?
- ◆ Do lesson plans state precisely what students are expected to learn and methods of assessing what is learned?

### Aligning Assessment

To ensure that curriculum and instruction drive assessment (and not vice versa), assessment decisions follow and are dependent upon curriculum development and instructional planning. Professional development opportunities for teachers include the effective use of multiple assessment methods. Assessments provide diagnostic information about what students know, can do, and where they need additional assistance.

Assessments also alert teachers to needed changes in instruction. In constructing classroom assessment, a major concern is that assessment items call for particular types of performance indicated in the specific learning outcomes

pertinent to each instructional activity and content goal. Proper balance using a variety of assessments, including performance assessment, improves validity.

Classroom assessments include a variety of assessment strategies, items for all topics included in instruction and a balance of questions at different difficulty levels. The teachers’ role is key in determining the purpose of assessing since assessments profoundly influence what students study. If students believe factual recall will be emphasized, students will learn facts. If assessment requires students to apply principles and theories, to analyze, synthesize and make judgments, they will learn to use higher-level thinking skills. Assessments provide teachers with tangible evidence of outcomes from instruction and confirmation concerning the effectiveness of their instruction.

### Questions to ask about assessment:

- ◆ Does the assessment reflect the standards?
- ◆ Do the items measure students’ ability to perform the standards?
- ◆ Does the assessment provide sufficient information to make decisions about whether students have reached a given level of proficiency?
- ◆ Does the assessment reflect the instructional program, the teaching resources and the instructional methods?
- ◆ Does the assessment reflect the information presented in the classroom?

### Alignment Example:

**State Benchmark MA.B.1.3.4:** The student constructs, interprets, and uses scale drawings such as those based on number lines and maps to solve real-world problems.

**District Level 6th grade Standard:** The student constructs scale drawings.

**Class Assessment:** After working in cooperative groups to measure the dimensions of the classroom and classroom furniture and to brainstorm new ideas for setting up the classroom to include more space for computer work stations, each child will submit a scale drawing of his/her chosen design.

**For more information contact the  
Florida Department of Education, Office of School Improvement: (850) 487-1023, SC 277-1023  
<http://osi.fsu.edu>  
or Curriculum Support: 1-800-471-8276**

### Additional Resources and References

Crowell, R. and Tissot, P. *Curriculum Alignment*. North Central Regional Educational Lab, Elmhurst, IL. 1986.

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Leitzel, T. and Vogler, D. *Curriculum Alignment: Theory To Practice*. Viewpoints, May 1994.

Jim Horne  
Commissioner of Education

