



Curriculum is the content to be taught and learned by the students (e.g., mathematics, reading, etc.) at a given grade level. Research informs the curriculum standards developed and adopted by professional organizations (e.g., the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; International Reading Association, etc.). The Appendix has a listing of professional organizations and websites of national centers that have evidence-based instructional and intervention resources, materials, and reproducibles, as well as assessments to use when implementing RTI. The curriculum standards of the professional organizations may also be enhanced and/or revised and included in policies through State Departments of Education. Each state department of education will have their curriculum standards, as well as related resources, available to educators within the state. It is important for teachers to be aware of the state curriculum standards, the available resources, professional development, and materials in the various content areas for students in their grade levels, as well as for students in other grade levels, with various disabilities, and who speak other languages. Often, the state departments will offer current, accurate, accessible, and free resources for teachers to use for instruction.

### Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare children for the future (National Governor's Association, 2009). These standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to go to college or enter the workforce, and that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Many states are working together to increase students' mathematical performance by developing and adopting new standards in mathematics or upgrading their existing standards through the CCSS. The CCSS are benchmarked to international standards to guarantee that our students are competitive in the emerging global marketplace (National Governors Association, 2009). The goal of the CCSS is to enhance collaboration among participating states in order to:

- Establish clear and consistent curricular expectations for students in content areas;
- Encourage the development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials aligned to the standards;
- Develop and implement comprehensive assessment systems that will replace the existing testing systems that too often are inconsistent, burdensome, and confusing, and to measure student performance against the CCSS.
- Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the standards (National Governors Association, 2009).

Most importantly, the idea of the CCSS is to provide more clarity and consistency in what is expected of student learning throughout the US. Until now, every state has had its own set of academic standards. Therefore, students at the same grade level in different states could have different curricular standards. These

standards will provide consistency among curriculums so that all students will have equal opportunities for an education that will prepare them to go to college or enter the workforce, regardless of where they live. Common standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students. Rather, they will ensure more consistent student outcomes through similar curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation (National Governors Association, 2009). For additional information, visit [www.commoncore.org](http://www.commoncore.org).



### **Evidence-Based Practices**

Many states and school districts review and adopt textbooks and programs to meet the established curriculum standards. Curriculum experts review content resources within textbooks and programs to assure that the resources have a published research-base that documents student mastery. The authorization of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (2002) brought a renewed emphasis on research validation processes to ensure that educators use the most effective instructional resources and interventions, based on scientific evidence. The What Works Clearinghouse ([www.whatworks.ed.gov](http://www.whatworks.ed.gov)) was established by the federal government to review and identify programs and practices that are evidence-based. This term means that instructional practices have produced positive student learning outcomes in actual school settings. Numerous educational organizations review research-validating instructional practices, programs, and interventions; a listing of educational websites appears in the Resources section of Appendices. It is important to continue to learn about new curricular resources and materials that are evidence-based and aligned to the state standards.

### **Reflection Questions**

- Am I aware of the curriculum standards in my state for the grade/subject(s) that I teach?
- Are there resources that are available to me as I plan for teaching and implementing RTI?
- Who else in my school (e.g., curriculum resource teachers, instructional coach, assistant principal, etc.) may be able to help me find this information?
- Are there district-adopted resources and materials that are required for instruction and/or interventions?



### **Curriculum Alignment and Coordination**

Curriculum coordination of instructional and intervention materials and resources that support similar philosophies and similar strategy use is an important, though often overlooked, aspect of designing interventions that accelerate student learning. The lack of coordination may not only contribute to the lack of success for struggling learners, but may also further confuse the students. In a multi-site study, when struggling readers were taught from various, non-aligned curricular materials, the students experienced curriculum strategy conflict and did not benefit from the additional dosage (time) or intensity of the intervention.

Another consideration is the model of RTI in use at your school: standard protocol and/or problem-solving. Details on these models may be found in Exhibit 6, page 18. It is important to be aware of the evidence-based curriculum resources and materials that

are used as intervention materials to address components and benchmarks of specific content areas (e.g., reading, mathematics, etc.) within the standard protocol RTI model. There may be standard intervention materials that are used in your grade level for reading and/or mathematics. It is important for teachers and instructional coaches to be aware of these resources to use.

Exhibit 11: Resources used in Standard Protocol Model of RTI on page 29 provides a format for documenting existing resources for specific areas of focus.

Curriculum specialists and coordinators within the school districts also provide resources and professional development for teachers related to the state and district curricular standards in content areas and grade levels. These resources are quite beneficial to teachers during the lesson and unit planning processes. Related resources may include annual pacing charts, calendars, and unit planning forms for teachers within grade levels to use to facilitate planning to assure that the curricular standards and outcomes are addressed.

Exhibit 12: Annual Unit Planning and Pacing Guide Considerations and Exhibit 13: Quarterly Units for Lesson Planning that follow will provide an easy-to-use format to chart this information.

Once annual outcomes, pre-requisite skills, core, intervention, and supplemental resources and materials, and assessments are identified by the grade level team members, instructional coaches, and curriculum resource specialists, it is important for teachers to think about and plan for their units and lessons within the curriculum maps. The format of this resource begins with the outcomes by considering the topics by quarters, by month, and then by instructional unit.

By connecting curriculum, instruction, and assessments for unit lesson planning, teachers will decide what subjects connect, what assessments to use for progress monitoring, when intensifying instruction and initiating interventions are needed. Co-teachers and other support professionals collaboratively review, reflect, and revise the weekly plans, as needed. During this process, teachers reflect upon and document assessment data of ongoing student progress as a way to determine if a student or small group of students require additional support through the tiers of instruction and supports prior to considering additional testing for services. Ongoing progress monitoring assessment data are collected, graphed, and documented weekly. This information becomes part of the referral process to the RTI school team.