Welcome!

In this module, you and your team will learn how to support curriculum alignment efforts at your school.

As the facilitator, you will guide your team through this Learning Experience. Are you new to this role? If so, please don’t worry. You don’t need to be an expert in facilitation or in curriculum alignment. All you need is the willingness to lead your colleagues, even if you are just a short step ahead of them.

To smooth your way, you’ll have plenty of help. In this Facilitator Guide, and the other materials in the Facilitator Tools section of the website, you will find tips and ideas for success. And when you’re done, you can share your own thoughts, challenges, and triumphs with other facilitators in Facilitator Feedback.

OUTCOME

Your leadership team will be prepared to support curriculum alignment at your school.

LEARNING GOALS

Your team will:
1. Build a shared understanding of curriculum alignment
2. Explore how to assess school curriculum alignment efforts
3. Create a plan to support curriculum alignment at the school

BACKGROUND

Leadership Teams and Aligning Curriculum

What do all schools with high student achievement share? They tightly link standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. And they do this across, as well as within, all grades and subjects. The results are clear and consistent expectations for student learning. By developing an understanding of how to align curricula, leadership teams can support their schools’ efforts to ensure all students excel.
PREPARE

The following activities will prepare you for your role as facilitator and will help guarantee a successful experience for your leadership team. Complete these steps prior to gathering your team for the module’s 120-minute Learning Experience.

1. Review About Success at the Core on the website. It provides important background information on the structure of the Leadership Development modules and the four Elements of Quality Instruction that anchor all modules.

2. Read the Facilitator Overview, accessed from Facilitator Tools. It describes your role and tools that can help you, offers ideas on how to maximize the impact of a Learning Experience, and includes a checklist to help you prepare for facilitation.

3. Prepare materials for this module:
   - Review the Multimedia Presentation (accessed from the Aligning Curriculum page) to familiarize yourself with the module’s activities and how they connect to content in this Facilitator Guide.
   - (Optional) Look at the Assessment Tool for this module, accessed from the Aligning Curriculum page. The Assessment Tool can help you gauge your team members’ knowledge and skills around the module’s three learning goals.

   **Note:** The Facilitator Overview provides suggestions on using the Assessment Tool.

   - Print copies of this module’s handouts: AC Handouts 1–5.
   - Create a large note-taking template titled Our School: Schoolwide Curriculum Alignment Matrix. You will use this template to record responses in Learning Goal 3. The template mirrors the matrix on AC Handout 3, which the team will use in Learning Goal 2.

   **Note:** Be sure that the template has ample space for your team’s ideas.

Sample template:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School: Schoolwide Curriculum Alignment Matrix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal Alignment: Alignment Within Each Level, Grades 6–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical Alignment: Alignment Within Each Content Area, Grades 6–8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LAUNCH (5 Minutes)

Your team reviews the module’s learning goals and agenda.

1. Launch the Multimedia Presentation, displaying Slide 1 to introduce your team to the module’s topic. Use Slide 2 to review the learning goals for the Aligning Curriculum module:

   Your team will:
   • Build a shared understanding of curriculum alignment
   • Explore how to assess school curriculum alignment efforts
   • Create a plan to support curriculum alignment at the school

   Note: By briefly reviewing the learning goals here, you provide your team with an overview of the entire module. The team will have the opportunity to consider the learning goals again at the start of each section (Slides 3, 6, and 11).

2. Pass out the agenda (AC Handout 1) and share any adjustments you made to it.

   Note: As you prepared to facilitate this Learning Experience, you may have adjusted the time allocated to specific activities, based on results from the Assessment Tool and/or your understanding of the team’s learning needs.
What does curriculum alignment mean?

A school’s curricula serve as the framework that supports student learning. To be effective, the curricula—standards, content, instruction, assessment—must be well supported and function smoothly. To ensure your school’s framework is strong, your team must understand how to align curricula. In this activity, your team thinks deeply about the concept.

EXPLORE Defining curriculum alignment (15 Minutes)

Your team increases its knowledge of what curriculum alignment is and how it is accomplished.

1. Review Learning Goal 1, Build a shared understanding of curriculum alignment. (Slide 3)

2. Pass out AC Handout 2. Explain the process your team will use to engage with the handout: after individuals read the questions and answers, they will turn to a partner and “say something” (a brief summary, a key point, an idea about the content, a question, or a personal reaction).

   Note: This reading strategy is called “Say Something.” If you prefer to use an alternate strategy, refer to the reading activities in other modules. For example, the “Read and Example” strategy could be an effective alternative. (See the Common Formative Assessments module.)

3. Give your team five minutes to read and then ask them to “Say Something” to a partner. When partners finish, invite them to share a highlight from their discussions.

   Consider This: Use the share-out to build a common understanding of what curriculum alignment means and to answer any questions.
VIEW (15 Minutes)

Your team observes how teams at Shaw Middle School work to align the mathematics curriculum.

1. Preview the video by summarizing its focus (see About the Video at right) and display Slide 4, the essential viewing question: What has Shaw done to horizontally and vertically align its mathematics curriculum?

2. After viewing, re-display and discuss the viewing question (Slide 5).

   Note: More Information (at right) highlights key points connected to the viewing question.

   VIDEO DETAILS
   
   **Horizontal and Vertical Curriculum Alignment**
   
   **Shaw Middle School**
   
   **Spokane, Washington**

   ABOUT THE VIDEO
   
   This video illustrates how leadership teams at Shaw Middle School work to vertically and horizontally align the mathematics curriculum.

   RUNNING TIME
   5:01 minutes

   VIDEO SECTIONS
   • Aligning Curriculum Within a Content Area
   • Aligning Curriculum Across Grade Levels

   MORE INFORMATION
   
   Mathematics teachers at Shaw work across grade levels and within grade levels to determine what will be taught, how it will be taught, and how learning will be assessed. Shaw’s teachers also collaborate with sixth and ninth grade teachers to ensure alignment across schools.
How can we assess our school’s curriculum alignment efforts?

Over time, your team must take a careful look at the entire curriculum (all subjects, all grades) to gain a full picture of schoolwide alignment. This exploration—the first step to supporting improved alignment—will highlight problem areas and progress. In this learning goal’s activities, your team explores how schools can best assess alignment efforts.

VIEW (15 Minutes)

Your team observes how English language arts teams at Covington Middle School use curriculum maps and “ins and outs” to align the Grades 6–8 curriculum.

1. Review Learning Goal 2, Explore how to assess school curriculum alignment efforts (Slide 6), and note that its activities apply the curriculum alignment definitions explored in Learning Goal 1.

2. Preview the video by summarizing its focus (see About the Video at right) and display Slide 7, the essential viewing question: How do ELA teams at Covington record and track their curriculum alignment efforts?

3. After viewing, re-display and discuss the viewing question (Slide 8).

   Note: More Information (at right) highlights key points connected to the viewing questions.

AT A GLANCE

Learning Goal 2

TIME
35 minutes

MATERIALS
• AC Handout 3
• Slides 6–10
• Video: Aligning Curriculum within and Across Grades

VIDEO DETAILS

Aligning Curriculum Within and Across Grades
Covington Middle School
Vancouver, Washington

ABOUT THE VIDEO

This video illustrates English language arts curriculum alignment efforts at Covington Middle School.

RUNNING TIME
7:18 minutes

VIDEO SECTIONS
• Curriculum Mapping
• Ins and Outs
• Benefits of Alignment

MORE INFORMATION

ELA department and grade-level teams at Covington Middle School work to vertically and horizontally align their curriculum, using state and district standards. The teams’ work has helped build a common curriculum. They use curriculum maps and a Grades 6–8 “ins and outs” document—which states what students should know and be able to do at the start and end of each year—to document and assess their efforts.
EXPLORE Using an alignment matrix (20 Minutes)

Your team explores how leadership teams can use a schoolwide curriculum alignment matrix to record, assess, and guide alignment efforts.

1. Pass out AC Handout 3 and note that it uses a fictional middle school, Main Street Middle School, to illustrate how alignment work can be documented and analyzed. Explain how your team will use the handout: individuals will read the first page of the handout, then the whole team will discuss the question at the bottom of the page. Use the same process for page two.

2. Give individuals a few minutes to read page one. Then, have your team discuss the question: How do the grade-level and content-area alignment efforts at Main Street compare to alignment work at our school? (Slide 9)

   **Note:** You will want to determine which kind of alignment (horizontal or vertical) is most salient for team discussion, and start the conversation there. You may also want to specify the grade level or content area, in order to make the discussion more concrete.

3. Ask your team to take a few minutes to read page two and then discuss the questions: How does the schoolwide leadership team at Main Street Middle School respond to the information in the matrix? How do their actions compare to the role we play in alignment efforts? (Slide 10)

4. Tell your team that in Learning Goal 3 it will use a matrix to assess your own school’s curriculum alignment work and will start creating a plan to support this vital work.
How can we create a plan to support curriculum alignment at our school?

Your team’s support is key to helping teachers mend and strengthen alignment. First, as your team discovered in the last learning goal, it must gain a clear picture of the current status of your school’s efforts. In this learning goal’s activities, your team will develop its own matrix and will begin creating a plan to improve instruction through aligned curriculum.

**APPLY** Supporting curriculum alignment efforts (30 Minutes)

Your team uses a matrix to assess alignment efforts in one content area and plan how it can support this work.

1. Review Learning Goal 3, *Create a plan to support curriculum alignment at the school (Slide 11)*. Tell your team that it will engage in a process similar to that of the Main Street Middle School team. Your team will develop a matrix and use it to identify how to support alignment efforts.

2. Show your team the large note-taking template, *Our School: Schoolwide Curriculum Alignment Matrix* (see PREPARE above). Your team will start to fill out the matrix by focusing on one content area (science, mathematics, or English language arts) and one type of alignment (horizontal or vertical). By the end of the activity, your team will have one complete cell. Tell your team that it will fill out the other cells at a later date.

3. As a team, choose a content area and type of alignment. Point out this cell on the template.

   **Consider This:** Choose a content area and type of alignment your team knows well. For example, if your team has several science teachers, you might want to focus on the science department’s alignment efforts.

   **Note:** This is just a first step toward assessing your school’s overall alignment efforts. So, you only need to complete one cell—not the whole chart.

4. Spend 10 minutes discussing the teachers’ and teams’ vertical or horizontal alignment efforts in the content area. As your team brainstorms, jot their ideas down on the template.

5. Pass out *AC Handout 4*. Read the directions aloud and ask: *Can we best support alignment in this content area by: (1) making the case for alignment or (2) guiding ongoing alignment efforts? (Slide 12)* Once your team decides, ask individuals to fill out the gray box at the top of their handouts.

   **Consider This:** You might want to refer your team to page two of *AC Handout 3* for a refresher on the two general categories of support.

6. Give individuals five minutes to read the rest of *AC Handout 4*. As they read, ask them to focus on the type of support they identified and to place checkmarks next to the actions that make the most sense. Encourage each person to add his or her own ideas.
APPLY (Continued)

7. Ask individuals to share the actions they checked and to note any new ideas they jotted down. Briefly discuss each one and then ask, Which of these actions would most help teachers in this content area with their alignment work? As a group, choose one action.

   **Consider This:** If your team is struggling to select one action, ask these follow-up questions: Which of these actions can our team best act upon? Which of these actions should we leave for other teams at the school?

   **Consider This:** Assure your team that this is just the first action they will take. They will consider additional actions as they review AC Handout 5.

8. As a team, agree on the first step in carrying out the action, a deadline for the step, and who will spearhead the effort. Write this information at the bottom of AC Handout 4.

   **Consider This:** Does your team need an example of a first step? If so, suggest that there are a couple of possible first steps in interviewing teachers (first action item under Making the Case for Curriculum Alignment). The individual who spearheads the step could make a list of teachers to interview. Or, he or she could draft a list of interview questions for your team to consider.
Now What?

This module sets the stage for your team’s ongoing support of curriculum alignment. Now, reflect on what you have accomplished and plan next steps. Doing so helps ensure that your hard work in this module will impact instruction at your school.

APPLY Next steps (20 Minutes)

Your team reflects on its progress in meeting the module’s learning goals, agrees upon appropriate next steps, and identifies actions it will take.

1. Display the Take Stock Survey (Slide 13). Ask everyone to take a few minutes and quickly rank the team’s current status related to each learning goal using the 1–5 ranking system. This will help your team reflect on where it stands at the end of this module. Each individual can write the score for each question on a piece of scrap paper.

   **Note:** Each individual should fill out the survey based on his or her view of the team’s current status.

2. Ask each individual to share her or his score, and write the scores on a piece of chart paper or the white/blackboard. Aggregate the scores to a simple majority (i.e., if three of five individuals assigned one learning goal a “3,” then “3” is the aggregate score).

   **Note:** Do not spend time seeking consensus on a 1–5 ranking for each learning goal. It is more important to agree on the team’s general status: Have you more or less mastered the learning goal or does the team have more learning to do? This part of the activity should take no more than five minutes.

   **Note:** As an alternative to taking the survey, the team could review the handouts and notes from the module to remind it of what it has accomplished and to identify where more work is needed. This option might be a good one if your team divided the Learning Experience into more than one meeting. If your team is running short on time, you could also suggest a learning goal for the team to pursue further, based on your understanding of the team’s progress in this module.

   **Consider This:** If anonymity is important, collect the responses, tabulate, and post the aggregate scores on the board.

3. Distribute AC Handout 5. Using the survey results, identify one learning goal from the module that your team plans to pursue further. Ask team members to record this under the Reflect section of the handout.

   **Note:** If your team chooses to focus on Learning Goal 1, it will continue to study and discuss the meaning and importance of curriculum alignment. If your team chooses Learning Goal 2, it will further explore how to assess curriculum alignment efforts. If your team chooses Learning Goal 3, it will focus on its plan to support curriculum alignment at your school.
APPLY (Continued)

4. Ask individuals to read through the “Suggested next steps” (pages two and three of AC Handout 5) for the learning goal your team selected. After a couple of minutes, draw the team back together to discuss potential next steps. Select one step to which the team can commit. Team members can record this step in the Commit section of their handouts.

   Note: To preserve time for identifying actions (the Plan section of the handout) take no more than five minutes to list next steps.

   Consider This: If your team struggles to identify a next step, suggest one based on your assessment of the team’s progress and needs. If none of the suggested steps resonate with your team, feel free to create one.

5. As a team, identify and record two or three actions that the team will take to pursue its identified next step. For each action, indicate who on the team will be responsible for making it happen and dates related to the action’s execution. Encourage team members to record agreed upon actions in the Plan section of AC Handout 5.

   Note: For example, if your team selected “Discuss what K–12 vertical alignment might look like at Main Street Middle School” as its next step, your actions might include:

   1. Team members individually review the definition of vertical alignment using AC Handout 2 and this module’s resources (accessed from the module’s landing page).
   2. The team gathers to discuss and record what K–12 vertical alignment might look like for one content area (science, math, English language arts) at Main Street Middle School.
   3. The team shares its thoughts on K–12 vertical alignment with the content area team (science, math, English language arts) at your school.

   Note: Asking individuals to record agreed upon actions on their copies of AC Handout 5 helps keep everyone accountable to moving your team’s instructionally-focused work forward.

6. Congratulate the group on a productive session!
Bibliography


