

**FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Fairfield, Connecticut**

**Curriculum Development**

**In the**

**Fairfield Public Schools**

**Framework and Procedures**

**SEPTEMBER 2004**

## Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction.....	1
Purpose and Rational .....	2-3
Guidelines for Curriculum .....	4-5
Curriculum Document .....	6-10
New Course Proposal .....	11-12
Glossary of Terms .....	13-15

## Introduction

Curriculum is the centerpiece of the instructional program; a curriculum provides the logistical and directional skeleton for shaping instructional strategies and implementing assessment practices. It is the curriculum that weaves together the components of schooling that accomplish our primary task - to provide an educational program for all of our students that is challenging, rigorous, and meets the highest standards of excellence. The curriculum is a means to establish systematically embedded skills and concepts across all grade levels and content areas and generate a continuous, coordinated, and well-articulated pattern of teaching and learning.

In Fairfield, as in all school districts, teachers and administrators must continually evaluate and revise the curriculum. This document, Curriculum Development in the Fairfield Public Schools: Framework and Procedures, is designed to provide a structure and process that will guide sustained assessment and modification of existing curricula and provide a structure to create, implement, and assess future curriculum documents.

Using the structure provided by the guidelines included in this document, teachers and administrators will form teams to assess, revise, and write curriculum that is meaningful and reflects current educational thinking, including best instructional and assessment practices. These teams will systematically address all areas of the K-12 curriculum on an established cycle. The result of the work of these writing teams will be living, working curriculum documents that will be used to deliver and assess a consistent, high level instructional program for all students across the district.

Curriculum Development in the Fairfield Public Schools: Framework and Procedures is a consensus document written with input from teachers, administrators, parents, and citizens. It has been reviewed and examined by teachers and parents. It is a vehicle to establish ongoing communication between the school system and the community about the process of curriculum development in the Fairfield Public Schools. Curriculum writing teams should know that each of the Guidelines for Curriculum and Instruction is offered as a result of a deliberative process in which teachers, administrators, parents, and citizens were able to accommodate divergent views and reach consensus through reasoned conversation.

## Purpose and Rationale

The primary purpose of the Fairfield Public Schools is to provide educational programs which meet the highest standards of excellence, challenge each individual to strive for the best of which he or she is capable, and prepare students to function as responsible individuals within a democratic society.

*“...education should provide for the intellectual, ethical, physical, emotional, and social growth of all students. An appropriately rigorous course of studies pursued in an orderly, courteous atmosphere shall allow students to develop their full potentialities and an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as students and as members of society.”*

*Fairfield Board of Education Policy 6010*

Curriculum is the fundamental component of the Fairfield Public Schools’ instructional program and contributes to the accomplishment of its primary purpose; it is the substance of schooling.

*“The curriculum design shall be a K-12 program with appropriate articulation between elementary and middle schools, and between middle and high schools.”*

*Fairfield Board of Education Policy 6200*

*The curricula of the schools shall be in accord with the Board of Education's adopted goals and legal requirements.*

*Curriculum development by the certified staff shall be guided by the document "Curriculum Development In The Fairfield Public Schools, Framework and Procedures", and such factors as the following:*

- 1. actual studies and information concerning the needs of students in this school district;*
- 2. the range of abilities, aptitudes and interests of the students;*
- 3. input from residents of the school district; and*
- 4. avoidance of discrimination.*

*The Board of Education has the responsibility for establishing curricula for the school district. Teachers shall teach within the approved curricula.*

*The Board of Education desires that unnecessary duplication of work among the various school levels be eliminated, and that courses of study and syllabi be effectively coordinated.*

*The Board of Education supports opportunities for faculty to consult and assist in curriculum development through workshops, study groups, assistants from outside consultants, and an extended school year to allow teachers to work on curriculum during the summer.*

*Fairfield Board of Education Policy 6200*

The document entitled Curriculum Development in the Fairfield Public Schools: Framework and Procedures is designed to ensure that curriculum for the school system is developed, modified, and assessed in a predictable and coordinated manner. A continual management cycle allows for the sustained assessment, revision, and implementation of curriculum at all grade levels and in all subjects. Guidelines for curriculum writing identify content, instructional and assessment issues and practices, which insure that the curriculum improves student achievement and broadens and enriches student experience.

## **Guidelines for Curriculum and Instruction**

### **Guideline 1:** Academic Expectations

Both the curriculum and instructional practices should reflect high academic expectations of all students and challenge them to do their best work at all stages of learning. Opportunities for self-evaluation, self-assessment, and self-regulation will be provided.

### **Guideline 2:** Opportunities for Learning

Both the curriculum and instructional practices should provide opportunities for students to learn using reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematical skills and concepts, applied study skills, and research strategies.

### **Guideline 3:** Curriculum Content

The curriculum should refer to Connecticut State content and performance standards, learning objectives, reflect Connecticut State assessment protocols, and provide for a variety of performance assessments. Instructional practices should provide feedback following assessments and encourage improvement.

### **Guideline 4:** District Commitment

Both the curriculum and instructional practices should reflect the school system's commitment to produce educated, literate, independent and civic minded students, preparing them well for the post secondary option they choose to pursue.

### **Guideline 5:** Learning Resources

Both the curriculum and instructional practices should include a range and variety of authentic learning resources, including field experiences.

### **Guideline 6:** Technology

Both the curriculum and instructional practices should provide for the use of technology as an integral part of instruction and learning.

### **Guideline 7:** Skills

Both the curriculum and instructional practices should provide for the development of basic skills, higher order critical thinking skills, and creativity.

**Guideline 8:** Different Learning Strategies

Both the curriculum and instructional practices should reflect an understanding of the typical developmental level of the students, the unique timing and style of each student's learning, and the range of achievement likely to be found within the grade or course. Teachers should support students through a broad range of instructional strategies and resources so each student has more than one pathway to learning.

**Guideline 9:** Social and Global Diversity

Both the curriculum and instructional practices should promote an understanding and appreciation of the diverse cultural heritages, which comprise a distinctive American history and experience. The curriculum should build on this foundation to provide knowledge of America's historical and contemporary place within the world's societies, a global economy, and a global ecosystem.

**Guideline 10:** Learning Across the Disciplines

Both the curriculum and instructional practices should provide opportunities for the integration of skills, themes, concepts, and topics across disciplines so as to encourage students to transfer ideas and knowledge from one discipline to ideas and knowledge in another discipline.

**Guideline 11:** Gender Equity

Both the curriculum and instructional practices should promote gender equity and encourage full classroom participation of all students in an atmosphere of mutual respect and high expectations for achievement.

**Guideline 12:** Curricular Benchmarks

Both the curriculum content and instructional practices should identify benchmarks and samples of student work for that curricular area.

**Guideline 13:** Core Experiences

The curriculum should identify those experiences and instructional practices that are considered exemplary by the Fairfield Public Schools and which will be a part of every student's learning.

**Guideline 14:** Assessment

The curriculum should identify common assessments that generate comparable and longitudinal data for monitoring student performance.

## **CURRICULUM DOCUMENT FORMAT**

### **Cover Page**

(See Page 7)

### **Acknowledgements**

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATION  
AUTHORS

### **Table of Contents**

Section 1: Discipline/Content Information  
I – III

Section 2: Course Description  
IV –XIII

Section 3: Units of Study

Section 4: Implementation Guide

Section 5: Citizen Guide



**SAMPLE COVER PAGE**

**FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT**

**DOCUMENT TITLE**

Board of Education Approved 00/00/00

**Acknowledgements**

**Board of Education Members**

List of members

**Central Office Administration**

List of staff

**Committee Members or Authors**

List of members

**Table of Contents**

	Page
Section 1: Discipline/Content Information.....	
Section 2: Course Description.....	
Section 3: Units of Study.....	
Section 4: Implementation Guide.....	
Section 5: Citizen Guide.....	

## **Section 1: Discipline/Content Information**

### **I. Vision Statement K-12**

### **II. Standards**

- State of Connecticut Content and Performance Standards K-12

### **III. Broad Themes and Concepts K-12**

- What are the 4 or 5 ideas that hold the program together?

## **Section 2: Course Description**

### **IV. Course Title**

### **V. Statement of Purpose**

### **VI. Audience**

- Grade Level(s)

### **VII. Prerequisites**

### **VIII. Design and Description**

- Audience is student/parent

### **IX. Course Objectives**

### **X. State of Connecticut Content and Performance Standards**

### **XI. Essential Questions**

### **Section 3: Units of Study**

#### **Units of Study**

- List specific standards from the complete list of standards. Selections should be limited and focused. (based on enduring knowledge)
- Organize each unit according to Topic/Theme/or Concepts
- Essential question(s) covered in this unit
- Objectives
- Sample performance assessment with student work
- Repeat sequence above for each unit

#### **Pacing**

- Suggested pacing
- Identify midterm material completion

### **Section 4: Implementation Guide**

#### **Connect Sections to Units of Study**

- Successful practices, sample tests, worksheets, etc., can be arranged chronologically, thematically, conceptually, by genre, etc.
- Grading rationale
- Primary and secondary resources

### **Section 5: Citizen Guide**

#### **Curriculum**

- Program and course description
- Units of study

#### **Primary and Secondary Resources**

#### **Models of Student Work**

#### **Strategies for Success**

#### **Homework Policy and Grading Rationale**

## New Course Proposal

**INTRODUCTION:** The following procedure for proposing and implementing new courses is designed as an opportunity to increase conversation about student expectations and achievement, effective instructional practices, and comprehensive assessment strategies. The process of course proposals and curriculum development requires the review of current practices and programs, the need for professional development to support the course proposal, and the articulation of a systemic curriculum framework. New courses should clearly be either a component of a core curriculum structure or an elective that supports K-12 program goals. A vital, organic, and comprehensive curriculum must always reflect the creativity and academic excellence of teachers, the interests and academic needs of students, the continual goal of improvement of academic achievement through the evaluation of curriculum effectiveness, and the response to external curriculum mandates and assessment data.

**TIME LINE:** All new course proposals must begin the course approval process by April 1 in the academic year prior to the printed course of study booklet for the following academic school year. This is approximately an 18-month time line from conception to implementation. (e.g. April 1, 2004 for the implementation of the new course for the 2005-06 school year).

### PROCEDURES:

1. The initiating teacher(s) will discuss the proposal with the appropriate curriculum leader or the curriculum administrator. The department will be solicited for suggestions and support. The following areas should be addressed: (use the course proposal form)  
DEADLINE: April 1
  - a general rationale for the course
  - intended audience and anticipated enrollment
  - course content, topics, and concepts
  - impact on other courses, departments, and Houses
  - physical space
  - estimated costs: textbooks, materials
2. The curriculum leader and the teacher(s) will present the course proposal to the building administrative team and the curriculum leaders. The administrative team will provide a written statement of tentative support or rejection with specific reasons. (May 1) All recommendations are advisory to the Superintendent.
3. Upon preliminary approval, the teacher(s) and curriculum leader will present the course proposal to the appropriate department for discussion and endorsement. (June 1)

4. The teacher(s) and curriculum leader or curriculum administrator will complete: (Oct. 15)
  - a course description for the course of study booklet
  - an outline of the major units of study
  - a preliminary budget
  - primary resources
  - a timeline for the writing of the curriculum
5. If the proposal is rejected, the teacher(s) and the curriculum leader may revise the proposal based on the reasons for rejection. The teacher(s) and the curriculum leader or curriculum administrator may bring the proposal back to the administrative team, the curriculum leaders, and the department. If the revised proposal receives tentative approval, it will go through the above process: If the proposal is rejected, the decision may be appealed to the Superintendent.
6. The final proposal will be submitted to the administrative team for approval. (Nov. 1).
7. If extraordinary circumstances should occur which do not allow the above time line to be met, an appeal for special consideration may be made to the Curriculum Administrator.

## Glossary of Terms

**Analytical Assessment Lists:** Lists of specific criteria by which the quality of a product or performance is judged.

**Assessment:** Using various methods to obtain information about student learning that can be used to guide a variety of decisions and actions. Methods include observations, interviews, videos and audiotapes, projects, experiments, tests, performances, essays, and portfolios.

**Analytical Assessment:** Assessment of student work using a set of specific criteria (content, skills, procedures, work habits), usually in a list format, and benchmarks of student work to define the performance standard.

**Holistic Assessment:** Assessment of student work that views the work as a whole and uses a rubric (rather than a detailed list of criteria) and benchmarks of student work to define the performance standard.

**Benchmarks:** Components of the content and performance standards. Specific learning goals for a particular grade level, grade cluster, or course.

**Content Standards:** Themes, big ideas, essential questions, and content objectives deemed to be important to an area of study.

**Curriculum Document:** A curriculum document has the following elements: national and/or state standards, a K-12 or 9-12 framework (big ideas, themes, goals, essential questions), course content including its own framework (big ideas, themes, goals, essential questions), units of study with cross references to course and content frameworks and standards, samples of assessment practices (tasks), samples of student performances on these tasks, and identified core experiences.

**Curriculum Implementation Guide:** A “teacher-friendly” collection of best practices. This will include: teacher notes concerning practices, sequencing, time mapping, sample tests, quizzes, projects, papers, etc. It is designed to be a hands-on guide to “covering” the curriculum. Primary and supplementary materials are identified.

**Dimensions of Learning:** The Dimensions of Learning are descriptions of the five types of thinking that are essential to the learning process: 1) positive attitudes and perceptions about learning; 2) thinking involved in acquiring and integrating knowledge; 3) thinking involved in extending and refining knowledge; 4) thinking involved in using knowledge meaningfully and; 5) productive habits of mind. The Dimensions of Learning were the basis for the development of assessment standards developed by Marzano, Pickering, and McTighe (1993), linked to the declarative and procedural knowledge of the content areas, such as science, math, and English, and the Lifelong Learning Standards (complex thinking, information processing, communication, collaboration/cooperation, and habits of mind).

**Dimensions of Student Work:** The basic elements that are always part of a specific type of work, such as persuasive writing. These dimensions, to whatever degree of quality they are carried out, can be seen in any occurrence of this type of work. These dimensions are the foundation on which analytical assessment lists are based.

**Enduring Knowledge:** The important declarative and procedural knowledge that have lasting value beyond the classroom.

**Evaluation:** The process of interpretation and use of information to make decisions; judgment regarding the quality, value, or worth of a response, product, or performance.

**Focus Question:** A topic specific version of the essential question used in the classroom. The focus question, “What structures have spiders developed to protect themselves?” flows from the essential question, “How are the structures of animals related to their function?” which in turn flows from the theme “Form Follows Function”.

**Grading Rationale:** This document is for students and parents. It identifies course expectations and the procedure that will be used to arrive at a final grade. It’s an explanation of the types of assignments, the time expectations (long-term, short-term, nightly responsibilities), and the percentages that will be used for these assignments in determining a grade. In most cases, grading rationales should be similar by course and level.

**Knowledge, Declarative:** Otherwise known as content knowledge, including themes, big ideas, essential questions, content standards, and information.

**Knowledge, Procedural:** Knowledge of process skills, such as nonfiction writing, computation, oral presentation, critical decision making, group work, self-assessment, or creative problem solving.

**Performance Assessment:** General term for an assessment activity in which students construct responses, create products, or perform demonstrations to provide evidence of their knowledge and skills.

**Performance Assessment, Authentic:** The products or performances that are assessed like products and performances that occur in the “real world.”

**Performance Assessment, Embedded:** A performance task that is placed into the sequence of classroom instruction where it is a powerful opportunity to learn by “putting it all together—content, process skills, and work habits.” This is the type of assessment that prepares students for CAPT.

**Performance-Based Learning and Assessment (PBLA):** An approach to teaching and learning which integrates embedded performance tasks within day-to-day instruction to serve both as opportunities to learn and opportunities to measure the competencies of the learner.



**Performance Maturity:** The degree to which a learner can use discipline-based competencies, intra-personal competencies, and interpersonal competencies “independently” to do authentic work.

**Performance Standard:** An established level of achievement, quality of performance, or degree of proficiency. Performance standards specify what a student is expected to achieve or perform to show that the student has substantially met content standards. A performance standard is sometimes called a benchmark.

**Performance Task Assessment List:** A list of the criteria to be used to judge the quality of a product or performance from a performance assessment task. The items in the list can be highly detailed or more general. This type of assessment tool usually provides a more analytical approach than rubrics provide.

**Portfolio:** A purposeful or systematic collection of selected student work and student self-assessments developed over time, gathered to demonstrate and evaluate progress and achievement in learning. A *portfolio assessment* is the process of developing, reviewing, and evaluating student portfolios.

**Prior Knowledge:** What the learner already knows. It is the organized information inside the head (world knowledge, schemata, and long-term memory). This knowledge is the result of learning experiences -- both unique and idiosyncratic to self and shared and common with others.

**Rubric:** A series of narrative statements describing the levels of quality of a product or a performance. The rubric can be a list of narrative statements or a matrix of narrative statements. Rubrics can be holistic or analytical. This type of assessment tool usually provides a more holistic approach than that of assessment lists.

**Self-Assessment:** The learner uses an assessment list, rubric, or benchmarks to assess his or her own work.

**Self-Evaluation:** The learner interprets information from the assessment of his or her own work.

**Self-Regulation:** The learner makes plans for improvement based on the assessment and evaluation of his or her own work.

**Samples of Student Work:** A collection of student work that is representative of quality work. This does not mean that every student’s work is saved. Examples of representative work might be: excellent work (best over the past ten years), target models (what you shoot for with most of your students), minimum standard, or “flawed” work. This collection will be used as models for instruction and will provide samples for benchmarks.

**Student Work:** Student work asks students to do something with what they know. It demonstrates declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and work habits.