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***Curriculum Mapping and Alignment:
The Principal's Role...***

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Curriculum Mapping and Alignment: Principal's Role

Principal's Role

Curriculum alignment allows us to articulate our instructional goals so that everyone understands them. It also is a powerful staff development tool. As everyone comes together in teams to unpack the standards and create common assessments, meaningful conversations occur. As the participants discuss ways to monitor student achievement, the seeds of collaboration begin to grow into professional learning communities that are dedicated to the principle that not only can all children learn but that all children will learn at our school—at our grade level—and most importantly in our classrooms.



The change in focus from what is taught to what is learned must be nurtured by the principal.

For all of this to come into being, principals have to guarantee that essential content is being taught by monitoring what the teachers are covering in their classrooms (Marzano, 2002). This coverage goes beyond ensuring that every teacher is following a pacing chart.

Instead of focusing on textbooks or workbook pages, principals need to ensure that all teachers are teaching the State Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level



Content Expectations. Thus principals need to ensure that the teachers understand what the Benchmarks and Grade Level Content Expectations are asking students to do.

Then principals need to help the teachers understand that textbooks and workbooks are not their curriculum, but rather are a resource to help them teach the standards and benchmarks. Principals need to encourage teachers to analyze their resources to see how well the textbooks and workbooks are aligned to the state expectations. (Sometimes we skip this step telling ourselves that the textbook company has done this job for us, but we are wrong. It is their job to sell us books; it is our job to use the books wisely. We can't use them intelligently unless we analyze them for ourselves—only by doing this will we truly know that we have covered the State Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level Content Expectations.)

Having said that, guaranteeing coverage is not enough, principals have to focus on student learning. In a learner-centered school, there is a strong feeling that if the students have not learned it, the teacher has not taught it, yet. This philosophical shift makes a big difference in the way the schools operate (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Lipton and Wellman, 2000). This change in focus from what is taught to what is learned must be nurtured by principals if it is to become a systemic change.

Effective principals must work with their staff members to articulate clear and measurable

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goals; to identify indicators that offer evidence of progress; and to develop systems for monitoring those indicators on a continuous basis (DuFour, 1999) It is the principal's responsibility to help create a culture where everyone is focused on student achievement and working together as a team while they do it, so that the team is directing its efforts at a shared initiative that has been selected based upon data. Limiting the focus is an important part of this process. As research points out, the idea is not to use data analysis to implement several strategies at once, but rather to limit our response, so that we truly can analyze the effectiveness of each new initiative (Schmoker, 1999). That way we can honestly implement and monitor the effectiveness of everything we are doing to impact student achievement.

If it is the principal's responsibility to make sure everyone is focused on this goal, then it becomes increasingly important that everyone is working as part of the team. Principals are key to establishing this collaborative working environment. In schools that function as learning communities, principals don't just encourage collaboration. The principals create structures and expectations to ensure that teachers will work in teams. (DuFour, 1999) According to DuFour:



- ✚ *“Principals must do more than delegate, empower, and then hope for the best.*

- ✚ *They must provide staff members with relevant background information and research findings.*
- ✚ *They must ensure that teachers receive the training and coaching to master skills that make them more effective in achieving the goals of the school.*
- ✚ *They must provide time and create structures for the staff to engage in reflection and discussion.*
- ✚ *They must develop monitoring procedures that supply teams with the data, information, and feedback that enable them to make the necessary course corrections and improvements to achieve team objectives” (DuFour, 1999).*

As we move away from thinking of curriculum as a merely a written document and start thinking of it as a mutually agreed upon body of knowledge and processes that every child in the school/district will learn, professional learning communities become a key part of the curriculum process. Without them, even school districts that devote tremendous time and energy to designing the *intended* curriculum often pay little attention to the *implemented* curriculum (what teachers actually teach) and even less to the *attained* curriculum what students learn (Marzano, 2003; DuFour 2004). This situation can be rectified by establishing professional learning communities that focus on each and every student in the district learning the curriculum, thereby making the *intended* curriculum the *taught* and the *taught* curriculum the *attained* curriculum. This can only happen if

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principals encourage and support the curriculum alignment process.

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