

A Curriculum Audit™
of the
Allentown School District

Executive Summary

Who Am I? Dr. Zollie Stevenson, Jr., Lead Auditor

- Trained on the curriculum management audit process in 1992.
- Have served on 42 audit teams; Led over 15.
- Served as Research Director, Assessment and Evaluation Director, Chief of Staff and Executive Director of Educational Support Service roles in Washington, DC Public Schools, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and Baltimore City Schools.
- Served as Research, Testing and Accreditation Regional Coordinator for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
- Served as Director of Title I, Title III, School Improvement Programs and State Assessment and Accountability Programs at the U.S. Department of Education
- Served as an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Bowie State University, Howard University and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
- Currently serve as Vice President for Academic Affairs/Chief Academic Officer and Associate Professor of Psychology at Philander Smith College in Little Rock

Purpose of the Curriculum Audit

- The purpose of the Curriculum Audit™ is to review the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum in school districts such as the Allentown School District and to review how each program and office was supporting teaching and learning and improved student achievement.

Function of the Audit - Quality Control

General quality control assumes that at least three elements must be present in any organizational and work- related situation for it to be functional and capable of being improved over time.

These are:

- ❖ a work standard, goal/objective, or operational mission;
- ❖ work directed toward attaining the mission, standard, goal/objective; and
- ❖ feedback (work measurement), which is related to or aligned with the standard, goal/objective, or mission.



Data Sources of the Curriculum Audit™

- **Documents** - These sources consisted of written board policies, rules, administrative regulations, curriculum guides, memoranda, budgets, state reports, accreditation documents, plans and organizational charts, assessments, and any other source of information that would reveal elements of the written, taught, and tested curricula and the linkages among these elements.
- **Interviews** - Over 100 people were interviewed for the Allentown School District Curriculum Audit™. These individuals included teachers, principals from the schools visited, curriculum personnel, executive directors, assistant superintendents, financial officers, operations staff, union representatives, parents, the deputy superintendent, members of the school board, and the superintendent
- **Site Visits** - All schools in the school district were visited by the CMSi audit team.
- **Online Surveys** - 585 teachers and 35 principals/assistant principals and 123 parents responded to questions on the online survey.

Standards for the Curriculum Audit™

FIVE STANDARDS

- Standard One: Governance and Control
- Standard Two: Direction and Expectations for Learning**
- Standard Three: Connectivity and System Equity**
- Standard Four: Assessment and Feedback**
- Standard Five: Productivity and Resource Use**

Standard One: Governance and Control

The school district demonstrates its control of resources, programs, and personnel. Under Standard One, the auditors expect to find:

- A curriculum that is centrally defined and adopted by the board of education;
- A clear set of policies that establish an operational framework for management that permits accountability;
- A clear set of policies that reflects state requirements and local program goals and the necessity to use achievement data to improve school system operations;
- A functional administrative structure that facilitates the design and delivery of the district's curriculum;
- A direct, uninterrupted line of authority from the school board/chief executive officer/superintendent and other central office officials to principals and classroom teachers;
- Documentation of school board and central office planning for the attainment of goals, objectives, and mission over time; and
- A clear mechanism to define and direct change and innovation within the school system to permit maximization of its resources on priority goals, objectives, and mission.

STANDARD ONE - FINDINGS OVERVIEW

- The auditors found:
 - Board policy, planning documents and job descriptions in the Allentown School District do not meet audit criteria.
 - Only 17% of district policies met the standards of the Curriculum Audit™ and that various stakeholders, ranging from Board members to teachers expressed concerns regarding district policies.
 - The strategic framework is helpful in establishing a broad vision for the district, but absent were measurable goals or objectives that could be used to mark the progress of the district in achieving the framework.
 - No district-wide plan was provided to the auditors
 - Campus improvement plans were more focused on prescribed steps rather than focused on goals that each school desired to achieve along with metrics.
 - No organizational chart was provided for analysis to the auditors.
 - Job descriptions that focused on curriculum management were missing key elements.

Standard Two: Direction and Expectations for Learning

The school district has established clear and valid objectives for students and clientele. Under Standard Two, the auditors expect to find:

- A clearly established, system-wide set of goals and objectives adopted by the board of education that addresses all programs and courses;
- Demonstration that the system is contextual and responsive to national, state, and other expectations as evidenced in local initiatives;
- Operations set within a framework that carries out the system's goals and objectives;
- Evidence of comprehensive, detailed, short- and long-range curriculum management planning;
- Knowledge, local validation, and use of current best practices and emerging curriculum trends;
- Written curriculum that addresses both current and future needs of students;
- Major programmatic initiatives designed to be cohesive;
- Provision of explicit direction for the chief executive officer/superintendent and professional staff; and
- A framework that exists for systemic curricular change.

STANDARD TWO - FINDINGS OVERVIEW

- The auditors found:
 - Curriculum management in the Allentown School District lacks adequate focus to direct the development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.
 - Curriculum scope is inadequate to provide direction for teaching and learning for core and non-core courses, particularly at the secondary level.
- There was a lack of internal consistency in curriculum documents and common assessments in the alignment of the state standards with learning activities and common assessment items.
 - As auditors compared the standards to the learning activities and common assessment items, there was often a lack of complete alignment when analyzing their content, context, and cognitive types.
 - Most often, the standards were more detailed than the activity or assessment item, so all aspects of the standard were not addressed.

Standard Three: Connectivity and System Equity

- The school district has demonstrated internal consistency and rational equity for students in its program development and implementation. Under Standard Three, the auditors expect to find:
 - Documents/sources that reveal internal connections at different levels in the system;
 - Predictable consistency through a coherent rationale for content delineation within the curriculum;
 - Equity of curriculum/course access and opportunity;
 - Allocation of resource flow to areas of greatest need;
 - A curriculum that is clearly explained to members of the teaching staff and building-level administrators and other supervisory personnel;
 - Specific professional development programs to enhance curricular design and delivery;
 - A curriculum that is monitored and its implementation supported by central office and site supervisory personnel; and
 - Teacher and administrator responsiveness to school board policies, currently and over time.

STANDARD THREE - FINDINGS OVERVIEW

- The auditors found:
- Existing policies and plans are inadequate in providing students with equal access to instructional resources, programs and services.
- Graduation rates were low; drop-out rates were high.
- Distribution of resources was inconsistent with the need for district-wide reform.
- Test scores were low overall
 - Performance gaps were evident among groups identifiable by gender, race/ethnicity, and ESOL status.
 - Hispanic, African American, and male students, as well as those from families with limited financial means, were over-represented in programs that have been established for academically disadvantaged students
 - Hispanic, African American, and male students, as well as those from families with limited financial means, and under-represented in those programs designed for the academically advantaged.

STANDARD THREE - FINDINGS OVERVIEW (Continued)

The auditors also found:

- Overall, the delivery of equal access and equity was ineffective.
- No comprehensive statement of expectations for classroom instructional practices was provided to the auditors.
- Professional development in the district lacked policy guidance, planning, accountability, and did not address the needs of all staff members vital to successful operations.
- ESOL program lacks policy guidance, planning, accountability, and adequate professional development which make the program inadequate to meet the needs of the growing English learner population.

Standard Four: Assessment and Feedback

- The school district has used the results from district-designed or adopted assessments to adjust, improve, or terminate ineffective practices or programs. Under Standard Four, the auditors expect to find:
 - A formative and summative assessment system linked to a clear rationale in board policy;
 - Use of a student and program assessment plan that provides for diverse assessment strategies for varied purposes at all levels—district, school, and classroom;
 - A way to provide feedback to the teaching and administrative staffs regarding how classroom instruction may be evaluated and subsequently improved;
 - A timely and relevant data base upon which to analyze important trends in student achievement;
 - A vehicle to examine how well specific programs are actually producing desired learner outcomes or results;
 - A data base to compare the strengths and weaknesses of various programs and program alternatives, as well as to engage in equity analysis;
 - A data base to modify or terminate ineffective educational programs; and
 - Organizational data gathered and used to continually improve system functions.

STANDARD FOUR - FINDINGS OVERVIEW

The auditors found:

- The district does not have a comprehensive assessment and evaluation plan,
- The scope of the district's assessment program across the core and non-core curriculum was inadequate.
- Though there are a variety of formative and summative assessments, the use of those assessments was inadequate when analyzed against audit criteria.
- The results of benchmark assessments at the primary level and in state-tested levels and content areas are not adequate for teachers to make immediate and informed instructional decisions, and the summative uses of the benchmark assessment are not resulting in increasing achievement.

STANDARD FOUR - FINDINGS OVERVIEW (Continued)

The auditors also found:

- District students consistently performed below the state averages at each grade level and in each content area, often by large amounts on state and national assessments.
- Student achievement has not improved and has generally regressed.
- The district has not formally engaged in program evaluation.
- Data use in the district appears to be limited and not used in a systematic manner to improve student achievement.

Standard Five: Productivity and Resource Use

The school district has improved its productivity and efficiency, particularly in the use of resources. Under Standard Five, the auditors expect to find:

- Planned and actual congruence among curricular objectives, results, and financial allocations;
- A financial data base and network that are able to track costs to results, provide sufficient fiduciary control, and be used as a viable data base in making policy and operational decision;
- School facilities that are well-kept, sufficient, safe, orderly, and conducive to effective delivery of the instructional program; and
- Support systems that function in systemic ways.

STANDARD FIVE - FINDINGS OVERVIEW

The auditors found:

- The district's budget development process is not focused on clientele needs, appropriate data, or strategic priorities.
- The general fund demonstrates inadequate solvency with revenues less than expenditures for three of the past five years and policy has not been developed in the last five years to operate programs and services within the districts means.
- Budget documents are not designed to promote cost-effectiveness and equity in program activities and services.
- The district's long-range facilities and technology plans do not meet audit criteria of a comprehensive plan.
- Distribution of technology across the district is uneven and lacks infrastructure.

Audit Findings

- A finding within a Curriculum Audit™ is simply a description of the existing state, negative or positive, between an observed and triangulated condition or situation at the time of the audit and its comparison with one or more of the five audit standards.
- Findings in the negative represent discrepancies below the standard.
- Findings in the positive reflect meeting or exceeding the standard. Audits do not issue commendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PDK-CMSI CURRICULUM AUDIT™ TEAM FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE Allentown School District

Recommendation 1: Develop a written organizational structure for the school district to provide clear direction and control for the design and delivery of curriculum and other district functions in the Allentown School District.

Recommendation 2: Develop and implement a comprehensive policy framework that directs a sound system of curriculum management and control. Develop and implement administrative guidelines that establish a framework for consistent decision making.

Recommendations, continued...

Recommendation 3: Ensure clarity through consistent district planning. Develop cohesive written plan documents that meet audit criteria and are communicated to all stakeholders. Use system performance data to identify gaps between current and desired outcomes so that successful change happens.

Recommendation 4: Develop and implement a comprehensive curriculum management system to provide direction district-wide for the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of curriculum. Review, revise, and further develop existing curriculum documents to ensure the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum beginning with the core content areas.

Recommendations, continued...

Recommendation 5: Prioritize equity in every policy, plan, and aspect of teaching and learning. Establish procedures for monitoring equity issues across the district. Connect equity for students with actions at all levels: district, building, and classroom, especially with classroom teaching and learning, professional development, and ELL.

Recommendation 6 - Develop a comprehensive student assessment plan that incorporates formative and summative assessments in all content areas. Utilize feedback provided by assessments at all levels of the organization to make informed decisions that positively impact student learning.

Recommendations, continued...

Recommendation 7: Adopt a Three-year Plan for Implementation of a Performance-Based Budgeting and Allocation System for all Allentown School District Schools, Departments, Programs, and Services that Equitably Addresses Clientele Needs, Curricular Goals and Strategic Priorities

Final Thoughts...

The audit recommendations should serve as a blueprint for improvements to many subsystems within the district for at least the next five years, including:

- updating policy;
- developing the organizational chart and job descriptions;
- developing a curriculum management system aligned with audit standards;
- strengthening instructional supervision and monitoring;
- improving the process of distributing resources equitably;
- focusing assessment systems and eliminating duplication of assessment efforts;
and
- making improvements in the budget development process.