



Chart Your School Curriculum

by Ramona Kerby

Plain and simple—you have to know the school curriculum, or you can't buy appropriate materials that support student learning.

Committees write curriculum guides and you can usually bet on one thing—the language is going to be cumbersome, excessive, and convoluted. That's not always true, but if you pick up the district's curriculum notebooks and they are very heavy, I've just proved my point.

Your goal as the school library media specialist is to know what every teacher in your building teaches, i.e., know what the district expects the instructor to teach and what he or she actually teaches. **You don't** have to know enough actually to teach frog dissection, basketball jump shots, or the specifics of reconstruction, but you **should** know the topics.

What you really need is a one-page summary chart of the curriculum by subject and grade level. Where do you get it? You make it yourself. Get every grade level curriculum guide, or if you are in a middle school, look at subject area curriculum guides and jot down the topics that are taught.

You'll find some vague topics such as "writing process" or "solving problems." Don't include them. They don't clarify what you need to purchase. Do your best to choose clearly defined topics such as American explorers, World War I, animals, plants, etc. Remember that the purpose of your curriculum chart is to make sense out of those notebooks.

For each grade level and subject area, select five to ten topics. In language arts, specify the kinds of literature taught. By all means, make your curriculum chart a little heavier in social studies and science. It's nice to include art, music, physical education, and maybe even library on your chart. Here again, be as specific as possible. Include the names of specific sports, musical composers, and artistic media. After you've jotted down the major units of study, ask one

or two teachers in each grade level or subject area to look over your topics to see if you've missed anything. This won't take them long to do, so bring it with you to lunch or ask them to look over it while they're on playground duty. Don't put the list in their mailbox. They'll get busy and forget to return it to you. Show them the list while you stand there and breathe down their backs. If you mention that you have money to spend on materials for them, they'll help you.

While you're standing there, ask how the unit is taught. What types of assignments are given? If students do group reports, then you might not need as many items. If students do individual projects, you'll need more items. Ask how long the unit lasts. If the teacher plans a two-week unit for the students to research and write reports on space, then you need lots of materials. If the teacher briefly covers magnetism, you don't need as many items. Ask when the unit is taught during the year. This information will help you decide what to place on the next order. Also ask if there are any specific library information skills to teach in conjunction with the unit.

Of course, you can make a pretty little questionnaire that asks these same questions—what, how many, and when—and then tabulate the responses, but you're missing a key opportunity. Talking to your teachers face to face gives you the opportunity to listen, plan, and collaborate.

Study the examples made by two of my former graduate students. Judy Ward created the elementary chart (page 27) and as soon as she shared it with her administrators, they distributed it to every elementary school teacher in the district. Several years ago, Cindy Stull created the middle school chart (page 28). She periodically updates it as it still is used in her building.

Use either word-processing or spreadsheet software. Once you get a copy suitable for photocopying, you may consider formatting it as a Web document later. But, don't make this project so overwhelming that you never complete it. Give yourself a month and work on it when you have a minute or on a couple of weekends. Get it finished!

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DORCHESTER COUNTY CORE KNOWLEDGE CURRICULUM

Subject	Kindergarten	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Language Arts	Mother Goose Fairy Tales Aesop's Fables American Legends Tall Tales	Poems Folktales Aesop's Fables Different lands, similar stories Drama Heroes	Poems Folktales China/Japan Greek Mythology Tall Tales Limericks Drama	Poems Norse Myths Myths & Legends Biography Autobiography Fiction Nonfiction	Poems Folktales Speeches King Arthur Novel Short Story Plot/Setting	Tom Sawyer Don Quixote Shakespeare Trickster Tales Gettysburg Address Sounds in Poetry
Geography	Maps & Globes Oceans Continents City State Country	Maps & Globes North America Early Africa Mesopotamia Ancient Egypt Mexico	Maps & Globes Americas Ancient Greece China/Japan Immigration	Maps & Globes Rivers of World Ancient Rome Vikings Spanish Exploration Thirteen Colonies	Maps & Globes Longitude/Latitude Relief Maps Mountain Ranges Africa Western Europe	Climate Zones Time Zones Europe Trade Routes Russia Japan
World Civilization	Continents Famous Landmarks	Early Civilizations Mesopotamia Ancient Egypt Judaism Christianity Islam	Asia India Hinduism Buddhism China/Japan Ancient Greece	Ancient Rome Mediterranean Early Traders Byzantine Empire	Middle Ages Feudalism Chivalry Holy Wars Medieval Africa Medieval China	Meso-American Renaissance Reformation English Revolution Russia Feudal Japan
American Civilization	Native Americans Columbus Pilgrims Presidents Symbols	Mayas, Incas, Aztecs Conquistadors English Settlers Thirteen Colonies Revolutionary War Louisiana Purchase	Constitution War of 1812 Pioneers Civil War Citizenship Civil Rights	Earliest Americans Early Exploration Settlement of Southwest Northwest Passage Thirteen Colonies Slavery in Colonies	French Indian War Revolutionary War Government Early Presidents Abolitionists Women's Rights	Pioneers Slave Life Civil War Reconstruction Native Americans States & Capitals
Science	Plants Animals Five Senses Magnetism Weather Conservation	Ecosystems Body Systems Matter Electricity Astronomy Inside the Earth Rocks/Minerals	Life Cycles Insects Human Body Magnetism Simple Machines Seasonal Cycles Weather	Classifying Animals Human Body Simple Optics Sound Ecology Astronomy	Human Body Chemistry Electricity Changes in Earth History of Earth Meteorology	Classification Cells Photosynthesis Life Cycles Human Body Matter & Change Physics
Art	Sculpture Totem Poles Calder Bruegel Cassatt	Cave Paintings Ancient Egypt Indian Masks Still Life Murals	Lifelike vs. Abstract Architecture Ancient Greece Japan	Elements of Art American Indian Ancient Rome Byzantine	Middle Ages Islamic Africa China New Nation	Perspective Renaissance 19th century American Japan
Music	Instruments Bach Herbert Mozart Saint-Saens	Orchestra Classical Music Opera Ballet Jazz	Strings Percussion Keyboards Ballet Instrumental Dance	Orchestra Brass Woodwinds Listening	Vocal Ranges Gregorian Chants Haydn Mozart Strauss	Jazz African American Ragtime Renaissance

While your chart will reflect the district and/or state curriculum, tailor-make it to your own building. Include the name of the school. The primary reason you are making this chart is so that you will learn the curriculum as well as having an easy-to-read buying guide for selecting materials. A powerful secondary reason is that your faculty and parents will want a copy of it.

Surprisingly, many teachers don't know what else is taught in their building. This goes for parents as well. Your one-page curriculum chart can be taped to the kitchen refrigerator. If loved ones need suggestions on what books to buy, what books to check out from the public library, or what topics to discuss at the supper table, a quick glance at the chart saves the day. It is to be hoped that when you show the chart to your principal, he or she will want to share it with the faculty and parents.

Post your chart somewhere in the library media center. Bring a copy with you the next time you visit the exhibits at a professional conference. After all, you'll be fulfilling your role as the curriculum leader of the building.

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Curriculum Chart Evaluation

- Have you included your name, the date, and the school's name?
- Is the chart one page, or two pages at most?
- Are the topics one or two words?
- Are the topics listed, not grouped together in paragraph form?
- Have you deleted vague topics such as "Language Experience" or "Problem Solving"? These topics won't help you purchase materials.
- Is the formatting consistent throughout the chart?
- Are there approximately the same number of topics in all the grids?
- Has a small easy-to-read font been used?
- Is there plenty of white space?
- Are all the words spelled correctly?
- If you prepared your chart in color, have you also prepared one in black and white that will photocopy nicely for teachers or parents?
- Does the chart look professional?

WALKERSVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Subject	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
LANGUAGE ARTS	History and Literature of African Americans Research of Authors and Poets Newbery Award Winning Novels Grammar and Writing	Search for Values <i>Summer of My German Soldier</i> <i>Witch of Blackbird Pond</i> Poetry Short Stories—E. A. Poe Grammar and Writing	The Holocaust—History and Literature <i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i> Drama— <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> Autobiography and Biography Selected Short Stories and Novels
MATH	Whole Numbers Decimals and Fractions Geometry Statistics and Probability Graphing Metric System	Fractions Ratio/Proportion Integers Solving Equations Percent Functional Skills Pre-algebra Language of Algebra Integers Rational Numbers Probability Square Roots/Pythagorean Theorem	Algebra Polynomials Functions Inequalities Rational & Irrational Numbers Systems of Linear Equations Geometry Deductive Reasoning Congruent Triangles Right Triangles Parallel Lines Quadrilaterals
SCIENCE	Water Module Body Mechanics Module Ecosystems Module	Waste Management Oceanography Endangerment Bacterial/Viral Diseases Endangered Species Chesapeake Bay	Energy—electricity, alternative forms, conservation, photosynthesis Genetics—DNA and forensics Rocks and Minerals Space—Sun, Moon, Planets
SOCIAL STUDIES	Reading Maps and Globes China Japan Middle East Africa	Physical and Cultural Geography of the Western World United States Canada Europe Australia	Arrival of Explorers Colonial America and the Revolution Westward Expansion Civil War Reconstruction
TECHNOLOGY	Technology Exposition Computers Safety Aviation Aerodynamics Construction	Technology and Careers Career Pathways Exploration Resumé, Job Application, Keyboarding, and Phone Etiquette Manufacturing Video Production	Problem Solving Aviation Transportation Simple Machines Safety Construction
BAND	ALL TOPICS ARE COVERED EACH YEAR IN MORE DEPTH AND WITH GREATER COMPLEXITY Music History Baroque Period—Bach, Handel Classic Period—Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn Romantic Period—Tchaikovsky, Brahms Nationalism—D'vorak, Sousa 20th Century Music—Bartok, Stravinsky, Debussy		
CHORUS	ALL TOPICS ARE COVERED EACH YEAR IN MORE DEPTH AND WITH GREATER COMPLEXITY Composers Elements of Music—melody, harmony, rhythm, tone, color, and form Music History Theory Vocal/Sound Production Musical Theater Dance Composition Singing in a Different Language or Style		
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	ALL TOPICS ARE COVERED EACH YEAR IN MORE DEPTH AND WITH GREATER COMPLEXITY Sportsmanship Teamwork and cooperation Goal Setting Conditioning and Strength Training Rules of Games History of Games Team Sports Volleyball Basketball Flag Football Soccer Field Hockey Individual/Team Sports Badminton Archery Tennis Bowling Golf Track and Field Cross-country		
THEATER ARTS	Reader's Theatre Japanese Theatre Theatre Skills	Science Related Issue Plays Monologues Poetry	Magic Shakespeare Puppetry
VISUAL ARTS	Peace Poster African Batik Grid Art Chinese New Year—puppetry Stained Glass Windows Action Paintings Three-legged Pots	Principles and Elements of Design Culture and Themes in Art Europe, Central America, Russia, South America, Middle East, Africa, Australia, Asia, United States— Native American Drawing and Painting	M. C. Escher—tessellations Self Portraits—Van Gogh Clown—papier-mâché construction Eccentric Teapots "Image for the Year" Drawing from the Model
SPECIALS	Life Skills Personal Development Substance Abuse Prevention Family Life Resource Management Foods and Nutrition Integrated Studies Learning Styles and Study Skills Media Center/Research Process Careers Integrated Projects	Technology and Communication Communication Skills Verbal and Visual Use of video recorders, tape recorders, digital cameras Use of computers, scanners, and publication/production software Foreign Language Culture and Language of areas which speak or spoke the language Languages offered include Spanish, French, and Latin	Health Family Life Relationships Anatomy of the Human Body Contraception and Diseases Drug Abuse Prevention Education Decisions and Decision-making Foreign Language Culture and Language of areas which speak or spoke the language Languages offered include Spanish, French, and Latin