



MINNESOTA REPORT

"Leadership for Learning"

Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum Comes to the Land of 10,000 Lakes (and 10,000 ideas) November 7-11

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) will hold its 54TH annual convention in Minneapolis, November 7-11, providing a once-in-a-career opportunity to tap the international talent from around the world while it's in our back yard.

Apart from presenting the unique opportunity to hear from authoritative voices in the field of gifted education, attendees will have the chance to attend sessions led by leaders in the field of curriculum development as well.

Examine differentiation with ASCD's most-read author, **Carol Ann Tomlinson**. Explore the Parallel Curriculum Model with **Jann Leppien**. Investigate and improve curriculum with **Jeanne Purcell** and **Sandra Kaplan**. This is simply a small sampling of the opportunities available for curriculum specialists. Among the 350+ concurrent sessions offered at the convention, here are some highlights:

- Differentiation Using Online Curricula
- Evaluating, Documenting, and Communicating Student Learning
- The Life and Times of a PCM Middle School
- Taking the 1ST Steps: Designing PCM Units of Instruction
- Developing Differentiated Curriculum with the Autonomous Learner Model
- Differentiation Grows Up: A Continuum of Examples as Teachers Learn
- Activities and Assessments to Promote Global Awareness
- Further Steps Forward Project Pathways, A Road to More Equitable Identification

Pre-conference sessions include:

- Parallel Curriculum Model (PCM): Integrated, Relevant, Challenging, and Exploratory Curriculum for the Middle Grades
- Getting Students Connected: Integrating Technology to Expand Learning in the Classroom
- Bridge Curriculum: Transitioning from the Core to Differentiated Curriculum
- Using Collaborative Lesson Study as a Professional Development Strategy to Improve Curriculum Differentiation Initiative

With **Dean Keith Simonton** opening the convention, **Robert J. Sternberg** speaking during Saturday's general session, and Minnesota's own **Garrison Keillor** closing, NAGC's 54TH annual convention is sure to be an extraordinary one.

Join NAGC in the Land of 10,000 Lakes (and ideas) this November.

For more information visit

www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=1357 or www.nagc.org

Developing leadership among educational decision makers to improve curriculum and instruction for Minnesota students.

HIGHLIGHTS ...

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Dr. Debra Pitton challenges us to rethink how we purchase materials and review curriculum

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"Leadership for Learning"

Building relationships in changing times

Dr. Richard Cash, Minnesota ASCD President, discusses the key components of ASCD's "Whole Child" initiative

I began my education career in 1988. Since that time, I've seen the educational landscape change most dramatically in the last five years. Much of this change can be attributed to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and the diversifying needs of the ever-expanding globalization of employment. From local initiatives to Federal mandates and legislation, education professionals are expected to accomplish more with fewer resources. Like no other time in our history has education reform been more foremost in discussion and of greater urgency. The 21st century career force will require our students to possess different skills than what were needed by previous generations.

For our children to be successful in this rapidly changing world, we need to look beyond the four walls of the schoolhouse to our partners in the community and the business place. Investing in our children's future is everyone's responsibility: parents,

taxpayers, communities and business leaders.

To assist schools and the broader community in joining forces for children, ASCD has developed "The Whole Child" initiative. The Whole Child revolves around providing an academically supportive environment for students that is healthy, safe, engaging, supportive and challenging. Your Minnesota ASCD will be focusing its efforts on these key agenda items.

Let's ensure all our children are HEALTHY

Children who are healthy come to school ready to learn, are more likely to do better on standardized tests, fully participate in the learning, and form positive social bonds. One way to create healthy learning environments in schools is through forming collaborative partnerships with local agencies such as Action for Healthy Kids: Minnesota (www.actionforhealthykids.org). Action for Healthy Kids' mission is to "foster sound nutrition and

good physical activity in children, youth, and schools."

Other ideas for ensuring students enter school healthy, learn about and practice a healthy lifestyle are for:

- Schools to develop a health advisory council with students, family, community, and business members.
- Students to be routinely screened for immunizations and vision, hearing, dental, and orthopedic concerns.
- Physical education and health classes to emphasize lifetime healthy behaviors.
- Schools to make available healthy food choices.

Let's ensure all our children are SAFE

Before students can attune to learning, they must feel safe and secure. Students whose learning environment is threatening because of such activities as bullying or disruptive behavior are unlikely to fully engage in learning. A recent study from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation found that two-thirds of high school dropouts say their schools should have done more to enforce classroom discipline.

One local example of a collaborative partnership for safe schools is that among Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis Park Police and Hennepin County Children's Mental Health. Through

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Two-thirds of high school dropouts say their schools should have done more to enforce classroom discipline.

a federally funded Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant, this partnership is building better learning communities where students and staff are safe and healthy, respected and respectful, challenged and engaged. In partnership with the University of Minnesota, data are being collected to demonstrate the work's impact on student learning. For more information on the initiative, go to: http://sss.mpls.k12.mn.us/Safe_Schools_Healthy_Students.

Here are two more ideas suggested in “The Whole Child” initiative to help children feel safe:

- Students, school staff, and family members establish and maintain behavioral expectations, rules and routines.
- Families are welcomed by school staff as partners in their children's education.

Let's ensure all our children are ENGAGED

Student engagement is essential in the learning process. When students are disengaged, they will not pay attention and therefore will not learn. To get students fully engaged in learning, teachers can motivate them through their interests. A highly effective way to get students motivated, interested and engaged in learning is through the use of technology.

Teachers who utilize technology will see a greater level of engagement from their students.

Today's students are in sync with the many forms of technology – they live technology as a natural part of their lives. Teachers who utilize technology in their daily lessons, expect its use in project-based assignments, and provide opportunities for students to explore via technology will see a greater level of engagement from their students.

Further suggestions include:

- Teachers use active learning strategies such as project-based learning and authentic production.
- Students have a chance to participate in a wide array of extra-curricular activities.
- Students have opportunities to participate in community-based apprenticeships and internships.

Let's ensure all our children are SUPPORTED

Students need caring adults in their lives to nurture them and provide opportunities to develop into mature, healthy and productive members of the community.

The Children, Youth and Family Consortium (www.cyfc.umn.edu) is one of many community organizations available to schools to support students. CYEF's website offers a wide range of information and resources for schools, community and families, such as a project focused on families building strong partnerships with schools to raise student achievement.

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7th Annual Curriculum Expos

**Wednesday, Jan. 23
Owatonna Holiday Inn**

**Thursday, Jan. 24
St. Cloud Kelly Inn**

Minnesota ASCD is pleased to announce that we will be hosting the 7th Annual Curriculum Expos on Wednesday, January 23, at the Owatonna Holiday Inn and on Thursday, January 24, at the St. Cloud Kelly Inn.

This year's Expos will focus on mathematics materials, but publishers will be bringing materials from all content areas for your review.

Each district should consider sending a team. In addition to reviewing all of the available materials, you will have the opportunity to learn about current thoughts in the field of mathematics and curriculum review and development. The number of breakout sessions is being expanded and will feature mathematics and curriculum practitioners from the state, plus leading educators brought to us by the publishers.

Our Curriculum Expos provide an excellent opportunity for your team to discuss the selection of materials and implementation of the new math standards and to gain insights into the field of curriculum. **MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW.** You will not want to miss this event. More details will be mailed to you later this fall.

**This year's Expos
will focus on
MATH**

Reconsidering the Curriculum Review Cycle

Debra Eckerman Pitton, Ph.D.

Professor of Education, Gustavus Adolphus College

In an age of limited financial means for school districts, budgets are carefully developed and assumptions for expenditures and income are strategically analyzed. School boards want to put money where it will do the most to support student learning. In order to maximize the use of district funds, a curriculum review cycle has traditionally been used to determine which subjects would be able to make expenditures each year.

What is the typical process for reviewing a school's curriculum? A quick web search under "curriculum review cycle" provided an initial view of district review cycles for eighteen districts. These cycles varied in length, but all reflected these following phases in various configurations.

Phase one: Review and write

Review student data and current curriculum as well as looking at best practices and research on instruction and curriculum for the particular content area; new or expanded curriculum is developed

Phase two: Implement

Implement the new or adjusted curriculum utilizing instructional strategies to enhance student learning; support and feedback are given to teachers; data on student learning is gathered.

Phase three: Monitor and adjust

Monitoring and adjustment continue. Teachers evaluate the strengths and weakness in the curriculum or new materials in preparation for beginning a new curriculum study after the completion of the third year of the cycle (LaFayette, IN, School District, 2007).

In some districts, these phases last a year, in others, two or more years. Curriculum review cycles tend to run from three to seven years. The longer cycles may provide more time for actual analysis of the current system and opportunities for teachers to develop the skills and strategies identified in the study or for longer implementation timelines.



Debra is a past president and current secretary of Minnesota ASCD. In addition to her work at Gustavus Adolphus College, she consults with school districts across the country on issues of mentoring and middle school education.

It is interesting that while the title for these review cycles is curriculum review, most incorporate a review of instructional strategies and assessment of student learning. The reality is that curriculum, instruction and assessment are irrevocably intertwined. A study of the curriculum requires that faculty consider what is expected from the learning; thus, it is necessary to look at assessment as well. In addition, in order to develop an understanding of how the curriculum will be presented to students, some review of instruction also needs to occur.

Traditionally, a curriculum review cycle leads to one thing – the purchase of new materials for the content area under review. A regularized schedule for content area curriculum review enables departments and schools within a district to maintain a timeframe they can count on funding for the purchase of new textbooks or equipment. However, now that we have standards that are evaluated yearly with state tests, why are districts still utilizing multi-year review cycles? The data is coming in annually, so waiting for a content area's appropriate review time in the cycle is no longer appropriate. The core content areas – language arts, math, science and social studies – need to be using

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a continuous improvement model. Each year student data needs to be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction. Assessments need to be reviewed to ensure their alignment with the local/state expectations and standards and funding provided as needed.

The current challenge for schools today is determining if they can provide more for less in a time of tight budgets. With the NCLB focus on core subject areas, the ability to financially support other areas of the school curriculum is becoming a struggle. The focus on math and reading/language arts means that there may be insufficient funds to support programs in science, social studies, art, music and physical education at the levels they would prefer. A curriculum review cycle that accommodates all subjects guarantees that no curricular area will be omitted from this evaluation and the potential funds that are inherent in a review.

Curriculum review should be dynamic. The idea of reviewing the curriculum on a four year cycle, for example, makes little sense given the rapid changes in any subject area and the immediacy of

the data that can be obtained on student learning. Curriculum needs to be reviewed using a continuous review cycle. There may be a timeframe for curriculum review cycles defined in school district manuals, but the reality is that schools are responding to the test data each year and using test results to drive where they allocate funds. It is time to abolish the old review cycle and invent a new one – a review process or cycle that takes into account the new era of testing and accountability, and focuses on continuously improving all content area curriculum and classroom interactions in order to enhance learning for every student.

This means that there needs to be a willingness for faculty to seek out and be guided by objective information sources. The test data we receive certainly is a part of any curriculum review, but what else can be identified? De Four (1989) describes learning communities where common assessments are used to determine if the students are meeting the criteria established in the curriculum. Curriculum mapping becomes something that is revisited annually as teachers determine where and when concepts and learning activities should best occur.

All faculty must come together to look at samples of student work to identify if academic goals are being met. Instead of a committee that only stays together through the curriculum cycle, the staff must be a part of this gathering and reviewing of data in an ongoing and meaningful way. Typically, a review cycle ends with everyone putting the documents away on their shelf, focusing instead on the new textbooks that have arrived.

Within a framework of continuous improvement, the focus needs to be on the improvement, not the purchase of materials. Teachers need to think beyond the former boundaries of curriculum review and the typical focus on what materials are needed in order to create new ways of supporting our learners.

Using continuous improvement as the basis for curriculum review begins with the knowledge that not all students are as successful as we would like. Funding should be allotted to the areas that need the most support for improvement. If, for example, the test data and teacher criteria tests identify that many kids are not able to pass the state science test, the curriculum review should be focused on science. If there are many areas of concern, they will need to be prioritized. All content areas need to be identifying what evidence of student achievement will be used to identify student growth.

All teachers should be a part of the review process for their content area, and this should be identified as a part of their workload. This means flex time or late start days should be built into the school calendar to provide time for teachers to meet and review student work and test data on an ongoing basis. This integral task requires that faculty receive compensation for this work. Every year the faculty needs to provide the board with information about the effectiveness of the curricular materials and instruction in all grades and subjects. In this way, it becomes clear where the money should flow.

Within this cycle of continuous review, department faculty/grade level teams can bring to the table requests for purchases based on the need as indicated by the data. While it is certainly reasonable that a request for new textbooks might be made, based on the fact that the books are 10 years old, it certainly must be considered whether there are other options for accessing updated material. Most importantly, the data must show that there is a real need for these materials. Resources should be allocated based on the need, as represented by the data. Rather than purchasing textbooks, some departments may request training for teachers on new methodologies and analyze the impact of this training. All areas that impact learning in the classroom should be a part of the review and may provide data that indicates a need to finance a particular curricular or instructional purchase.

There also needs to be a process to monitor the equity of this system. If there have been no funds available for a departmental purchase for many years, and the data shows this is a need, the board needs to plan for this to be a part of future budgets. In this way, even if attention is primarily focused on core subject curricular materials, all departments will know that there are funds available if the data shows a clear need. Departments may be challenged to look differently at the way in which they determine student growth in order to demonstrate the need for particular resources.

Kelly and Melograno (2004) state that for budgeting purposes, school districts need to plan when the funds will be available for a large purchase. Some departments may choose to find alternatives to the traditional large expenditures for textbooks. This may provide a way to balance expenses so that there are more funds to go around. In any case, the arts, technology, world language and physical education must join their colleagues in English, math, science and social studies to continuously gather data to identify student growth and the resources needed to increase that growth. The use of data to support curricular material purchase for all areas of academics is now an imperative.

So how do we develop a continuous improvement model to respond to annual test data while not ignoring all academic areas? Every academic area needs to identify goals related to student learning and then gather data on how these goals are being met. State test data, teacher pre and post tests, lesson study processes and reviews of student work should all be a part of this mix. This continuous improvement curriculum review model can be based on previous review work but must move away from set cycles to an ongoing process. Here are some ideas:

1. Review test data for core areas in math, science, language arts/reading and social studies each year, as well as student growth based on teacher criteria.
2. Review student work in each academic area each year that reflects goals and objectives for student learning.
3. Align test data with curriculum currently in use; look for areas to strengthen or to change on a yearly basis.

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Curriculum review (continued from page five)

4. Identify data to support acquisition of new student materials in all areas on a yearly basis.
5. Plan a district budget that uses yearly information to make purchases 'as needed' to facilitate ongoing student learning.
6. Gather yearly data and review over a minimum of three years to identify trends. Use this trend data to support budget decisions in areas not addressed in the previous three years.
7. Establish a time frame and a budget line for purchases that are valid but cannot be made in a current year.
8. Provide ongoing time and funding for teachers to work together to review student work and data and to identify goals.

It is time to use what we know as educators, that the process of curriculum and instruction review happens every night when we reflect on what happened in the classroom that day. We know that this ongoing reflection makes us better teachers – let's use the same ongoing, continuous curriculum review cycle to enhance our curriculum as well.

Building relationships (continued from page three)

Here are three additional possibilities for providing students access to personalized learning and to qualified, caring adults:

- Every student has an adult advisor or mentor.
- Students have access to school counselors or other student support systems.
- Partnerships with community-based mental health organizations assist in nurturing positive student growth.

Let's ensure schools and communities where our children are CHALLENGED

In this era of standards and accountability, we can never let go of keeping our students challenged to the edge of their abilities. Curriculum that is framed in 21st Century skills is essential for our students to be prepared for their future. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills was formed by prominent business and education leaders to address the need for our schools to teach such "emerging essential content as global awareness; financial, economic and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; health and wellness; and life skills" (www.21stcenturyskills.org).

We must ensure that every student is challenged by:

- Having a well-rounded curriculum, which includes rigorous programs in arts, foreign languages, and social studies.
- Having multiple ways for students to meet content standards

References:

DuFour, R., & Baker, R. (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

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O'Donnell, S. (June, 2001). *International review of curriculum and assessment frameworks: Thematic probe and curriculum review: An international perspective*. NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research.): Berkshire, England.

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and graduation requirements.

- Having content that is differentiated to meet the needs of every student.

Minnesota ASCD is committed to providing valuable and timely services and resources for its members. As you will see in this edition, several events sponsored by Minnesota ASCD are coming your way. Additionally, the focus of our board's work will be around the Whole Child initiative. We look forward to serving you.

Thank you for all the outstanding work you do to ensure our students are healthy, safe & secure, engaged, supported and challenged academically.



Richard Cash
President

Richard is the Director of Gifted and Talented Programs, K-12, for the Bloomington Minnesota Public Schools, and teaches graduate level courses at Concordia University and Hamline University.

Visit ASCD's website on The Whole Child: www.wholechildeducation.org

Be an effective education advocate!

Go to www.ascd.org and click on "Action Center"



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Are you currently a member of our parent organization, International ASCD?

yes no

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**Membership form
 for you and your
 colleagues**

Pass the form on this page to your friends, or make copies and distribute them among colleagues who can benefit from membership in Minnesota ASCD. The \$35 for dues provides basic funding for organizing several conferences and preparing follow-up materials, publishing newsletters, organizing Curriculum Expos, and other services for Minnesota educators.

One key feature of a membership in Minnesota ASCD is the unique opportunity it provides to educators in all career tracks to network with each other, share important ideas and information, and gain insights into the latest developments in educational initiatives designed for curriculum and instruction.

Thanks for your own membership, and many thanks for encouraging others to join!

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