

STANDARD 2: A School System Has Established Clear and Valid Objectives for Students.

A school system meeting this audit standard has established a clear, valid, and measurable set of pupil standards for learning and has set the objectives into a workable framework for their attainment.

Unless objectives are clear and measurable, there cannot be a cohesive effort to improve pupil achievement in the dimensions in which measurement occurs. The lack of clarity and focus denies to a school system's educators, the ability to concentrate scarce resources on priority targets. Instead, resources may be spread too thin and be ineffective in any direction. Objectives are, therefore, essential to attaining local quality control via the school board.

What the Auditors Expected to Find in the Anchorage School District

Common indicators the PDK-CMSi auditors expected to find are:

- 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 superintendent and professional staff, and
- A framework that exists for systemic curricular change.

Overview of What the Auditors Found in the Anchorage School District

This section is an overview of the findings that follow in the area of Standard Two. The details follow within separate findings.

Various documents were presented to the auditors describing the goals and plans for processes and procedures to provide direction for curriculum design and delivery. However, a single, comprehensive curriculum management plan which would provide a focused and cohesive educational program was not presented to the auditors.

The auditors found district staff making strides toward aligning district curriculum with the *Alaska Content and Performance Standards*. However, all curriculum areas in the Anchorage School District have not yet been fully aligned in design to increase student achievement. Work is in progress in math, social studies, and art towards developing greater specificity between local content and performance standards and the Alaskan content standards to guide classroom teaching. Online curriculum is being developed as well as a curriculum change process that, when completed, will contain most of the elements of a quality curriculum. All teachers have received the state-mandated curriculum, the *Alaska Content and Performance Standards*. However, staff development on the understanding and implementation of these standards has been sporadic and inconsistent (see Finding 1.4). A variety of staff development opportunities relating to curriculum are available within the district from various content specialists and Curriculum Coordinators throughout the school year and summer.

The audit review team found the scope of the written curriculum to be adequate at the elementary level, inadequate at the secondary level (middle school and high school). All grade levels, kindergarten through grade twelve, had written curriculum documents. However, at the secondary level, auditors were not provided with content curricula for many of the courses offered. None of the available curriculum guides contain enough information to provide teachers with comprehensive work plans. The curriculum documents did not detail what skills would be assessed and by what means. Suggestions for instructional materials to be utilized when teaching specific objectives were not included in most guides. Teaching strategies were not linked to the objectives. There was minimal evidence that the *Alaska State Performance Standards* had been correlated with the written objectives, with the exception of the mathematics curriculum. The mathematics cross-reference of the *Alaska Performance Standards* with the *Anchorage School District Performance Standards* was provided to the auditors on-site. Curriculum documents were provided indicating *Alaska Performance Standards* alignment efforts were being conducted in the areas of art and social studies.

A written curriculum is available for most subjects and courses taught. District curriculum guides reviewed by the auditors lack many of the elements defined by audit criteria for quality curriculum guides. Most curriculum guides found in the Anchorage School District are not adequate to direct teaching from classroom to classroom, across grade levels and among schools. This minimal direction provided by the curriculum guides contributes to inconsistency in the delivery of the curriculum. The auditors found that curriculum delivery in many classrooms is not congruent with district expectations in regard to differentiation of instruction, problem solving, and critical thinking strategies for students. Many opportunities for staff development exist and are often selected to support the district expectations for instruction; however, most are not aligned specifically to district curriculum objectives.

The auditors also found that the delivery of the curriculum was inconsistently coordinated across the Anchorage School District. The curriculum coordination varied among grade levels and schools. Little articulation between grade levels took place at the building level. Auditors found that what was taught in the classrooms came from a variety of sources: *Anchorage School District Content and Performance Standards*, *Alaskan Content and Performance Standards*, various reading programs driven by textbooks or leveled supplemental reading books, and unofficial curriculum documents generated at campus sites.

Finding 2.1: The District Lacks a Comprehensive Curriculum Management Plan to Establish Processes, Procedures, and Timelines for Curriculum Review, Development, and Implementation.

A school district with strong curriculum management has a comprehensive plan that establishes guidelines and procedures for the design and delivery of curriculum. The plan delineates the procedural intent of the district leadership and provides direction for curriculum development, adoption, implementation, evaluation, and revision. Such a plan is designed to function in coordination with other major plans (e.g., the technology plan, budgeting process, and textbook adoption procedures).

The auditors examined four documents presented to them as planning documents for curriculum.

- *The Alaskan State Standards* – These standards are divided into two categories: Content Standards and Performance Standards. Content Standards are broad statements of what students should know and be able to do as a result of their public school experience. Performance Standards are measurable statements of what students should know and be able to do. The State Board of Education and Early Development adopted performance standards in reading, writing, and mathematics in January 1999. Performance Standards, unlike Content Standards, can be measured with a variety of testing instruments. They are presented at four benchmark levels, for

ages 5-7, to be assessed in third grade; ages 8-10, to be assessed at sixth grade; ages 11-14, to be assessed in eighth grade; and ages 15-18, to be assessed on the High School Qualifying Exam.

- *Cultural Standards for Alaska Students* – The standards were developed by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, in 1998. That same year they were adopted by the State Board of Education and Early Child Development. These standards were meant to enrich the Content Standards. Cultural standards are broad statements of what students should know and be able to do as a result of their experience in a school that is aware of and sensitive to the surrounding physical and cultural environment.
- The *Anchorage School District Mission, Goals, Commitment, and Focus statements*, adopted September 2001. These statements are found on the district web page. They also precede the Superintendent’s Message in the kindergarten to grade 6 Curriculum Overview document provided on-site to the auditors and available via the district web page.
- The *Anchorage School District Curriculum and Evaluation, Curriculum Change Process*, January 2002 (cover page), the remainder of the document is dated December 4, 2001. This document was provided to auditors during the on-site visit. It details the Anchorage School District curriculum change process for district-wide curriculum.

In addition, the auditors examined board policies, regulations, memoranda from central office administrators, as well as the curriculum, evaluation, and instructional support site on the district web page. The auditors also interviewed board members, district-level and campus-based administrators, and parents about curriculum planning.

The auditors found the district had policies which included direction for curriculum management efforts, strategies, and actions; however, a single, comprehensive curriculum management plan to convey the procedural intent of the district leadership and provide adequate direction for curriculum development, alignment with national and state content and performance standards, adoption, implementation, evaluation, and revision was not presented to the auditors.

The auditors have identified 11 characteristics of a comprehensive curriculum management plan. These components are described in [Exhibit 2.1.1](#). In the absence of an integrated planning document, the auditors assessed the Anchorage School District board policies; the Anchorage School District Curriculum and Evaluation, Curriculum Change Process, January 2002, document; action plans; and other curriculum documents relative to the characteristics. The auditors’ rating of these documents is also depicted in [Exhibit 2.1.1](#).

Exhibit 2.1.1		
Characteristics of a Comprehensive Curriculum Management Plan and Auditors’ Assessments of District Approach Anchorage School District 2002		
Characteristics	Auditors’ Rating	
	Adequate	Inadequate
1. Describe the philosophical framework for the design of the curriculum (standards-based, results-based, competency-based).	X	
2. Identifies a periodic cycle of curriculum review of all subject areas at all grade levels.		X
3. Specifies the roles and responsibilities of the Board, central office staff members, and school-based staff members.	X	
4. Describes the timing, scope, and procedures for curriculum guides.		X
5. Presents the format and components of aligned curriculum guides.		X
6. Directs how state and national standards will be included in the curriculum.		X
7. Specifies overall assessment procedures to determine curriculum		X

effectiveness.		
Exhibit 2.1.1 (continued) Characteristics of a Comprehensive Curriculum Management Plan and Auditors' Assessments of District Approach Anchorage School District 2002		
Characteristics	Auditors' Rating	
	Adequate	Inadequate
8. Describes the approaches by which tests and assessment data will be used to strengthen curriculum and instruction.		X
9. Identifies the design of a comprehensive staff development program linked to curriculum design and delivery.		X
10. Presents procedures for monitoring curriculum delivery.		X
11. Establishes a communication plan for the process of curriculum design and delivery as well as celebration of progress and quality		X

Exhibit 2.1.1 shows that the district's policies and curriculum-related documents meet two of the audit criteria (18 percent). Seventy percent of the criteria must be met for a system to be considered adequate; therefore, the Anchorage School District's curriculum management documents were inadequate.

Each of the characteristics is detailed below.

Characteristic 1 - Philosophical Framework for the Design of the Curriculum

This characteristic was met by the Anchorage School District curriculum-related documents.

- The *Anchorage School District Mission Statement* states, "The mission of the Anchorage School District is to educate students for success in life."
- The *Anchorage School District Goals Statement* states, "Increase academic excellence by emphasizing student achievement, developing respect for diversity, maintaining quality staff retention, recruitment and training, and maximizing opportunities for life-long learning."
- The *Anchorage School District Commitment Statements* state, "Students will demonstrate academic excellence as indicated by performance on state and district measures of academic performance. All students will make progress toward meeting Anchorage and State Benchmarks for reading, writing, and math."
- *Board Policy 341 The Curriculum* states, "The standard curriculum is intended to challenge and stimulate students."
- The mission statement of the Curriculum, Evaluation, and Instructional Support Department found on the district web page states, "The mission of Curriculum, Evaluation, and Instructional Support is to research and guide the selection and implementation of exceptional district-wide instructional materials; to support the use of best teaching practices through ongoing training and professional development; to work in partnership with the community; and to collaborate with instructional leaders to ensure success for all students in the Anchorage School District."
- The mission statement found in the *Anchorage School District Curriculum and Evaluation, Curriculum Change Process, January 2002*, document states, "The Mission of the Curriculum and Evaluation Department is to provide leadership and accountability for the development and implementation of a district-wide curriculum for grades K-12. In addition, the Department works to provide instructional support; establish and maintain partnerships within the community; and to collaborate with school management to ensure excellence in instruction for all children in the Anchorage School District."

Characteristic 2 - Periodic Cycle of Curriculum Review

- *Board Policy 341.2 Curriculum Development* states, “The district’s curriculum is regularly reviewed and developed to enhance student achievement.”
- *Board Policy 341.21 Curriculum Committees* states, “Curriculum committees shall be scheduled to meet at least quarterly, and may meet more frequently if necessary.”

No schedule as per board policy of curriculum committee meetings was presented to the auditors. Auditors were invited and did attend advisory committee meetings while on-site. Curriculum review and/or development, however, were not topics under consideration.

Characteristic 3 - Roles and Responsibilities for Curriculum Management

The assignment of specific roles and responsibilities for curriculum management is provided in various board policies and informal documents (see Finding 1.2). Responsibilities of the Board of Education, the superintendent, and all certificated personnel related to curriculum management are outlined in the following policies:

- *Board Policy 341 The Curriculum* states, “The Board shall approve the curriculum and the major instructional materials.”
- *Board Policy 341.1 Course of Studies* states, “Additional electives in the middle schools may be offered, pending approval of the Middle School Executive Director.”
- *Board Policy 341.21 Curriculum Development*, requires “The Superintendent, or his/her designee, shall be responsible for developing procedures for planning, implementing, and evaluating curriculum. The Board shall have opportunities to provide comments and direction on the specific curriculum under review at the beginning of the process.

A flow chart found in the *Anchorage School District Curriculum and Evaluation, Curriculum Change Process, January 2002*, titled “Anchorage School District Curriculum Change Process” contradicts *Board Policy 341.21*. The flow chart indicates the School Board does not have opportunity for input until the culmination of the process at the time the item is brought to the Board for consideration.

- *Board Policy 341.21 Curriculum Committees* requires, “The Superintendent shall be responsible for the establishment of curriculum committees composed of parents, business and community representatives, students, and professional staff, with overlapping terms. The functions of the curriculum committees shall include but not be limited to the following:
 - a. Develop recommendations for content and performance standards for respective areas.
 - b. Develop recommendations for curriculum frameworks, course descriptions, and titles.
 - c. Develop recommendations for the adoption of instructional materials and textbooks to support the adopted content and performance standards.
 - d. Assist central administration staff in review, evaluation, and recommendations for changes in curriculum implementation and design.
 - e. Develop recommendations to address training needs in curriculum areas.

During curriculum renewal and materials adoption processes, a ‘Curriculum/Adoption Review Committee’ may be appointed to work under the direction of, and make recommendations to, the Curriculum Committee in the appropriate area. These recommendations will then be reviewed by the Instructional Division, the Anchorage Council of PTAs, the MECC, and the Student Advisory Board prior to forwarding to the Superintendent for final recommendation to the School Board.

Due to the community concerns regarding representation of various viewpoints on the Health curriculum Committee, the Board will participate in and approve selection of parents and citizen members to this committee.”

Characteristic 4 – Timing, Scope, and Procedures for Curricular Review

A single page document outlining a proposed curriculum review cycle was presented to auditors on-site. The title of this paper was, “Anchorage School District, Proposed Curriculum/Materials Review Cycle, Six-year Cycle, September 2001, revised 2/13/02, 9:00 a.m.” This document can also be found on the district web page without the revision date under “Curriculum Documents” on the Curriculum, Evaluation, and Instructional Support web page. For each year beginning 2001-2002 and continuing through 2006-2007, the disciplines or curricular areas and grade levels up for review are listed. Formal directions and/or explanations as to the purpose, intent or use of this document were not provided.

- An overview of the curriculum change process is outlined in the *Anchorage School District Curriculum and Evaluation, Curriculum Change Process, January 2002*, document. The process reiterates *Board Policy 341.21*. In the section titled *Curriculum Renewal Cycle*, an appointed “Review Committee” is charged with the responsibility of reviewing and recommending instructional programs and/or instructional materials changes. Procedures are also provided in this document for the curriculum change process.

Characteristic 5 – Format and Components of Curriculum Guides

Board policy presents general specifications for the components of curriculum guides:

- *Board Policy 341 The Curriculum* states, “Academic programs to meet the needs of advanced students shall be established within the Anchorage School District. Acceleration, enhancement, and/or differentiation of the regular curriculum, including Honors, Advanced Placement, Special Education, and ESL classes, will be incorporated into the curriculum.”
- *Board Policy 341.1 Course of Studies* requires, “The secondary courses will include language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, world languages, career technology, fine arts, physical education, and health.

The elementary curriculum shall include language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, art, health, music, physical education, and library skills.”

Board policy for curriculum management lacks specifics for curriculum format and components (see [Finding 1.1](#)). An analysis of district curriculum guides as compared to Curriculum Audit Criteria found most guides inadequate (see [Finding 2.3](#)).

Characteristic 6 – Direction for How State and National Standards will be Included in the Curriculum

- *Board Policy 341 The Curriculum* states, “The program of instruction in the schools shall be based on locally adopted standards and shall meet or exceed the requirements set forth by the State Department of Education.”
- The *Anchorage School District Curriculum and Evaluation, Curriculum Change Process, January 2002*, document provides a Curriculum Change Proposal Template and samples. Section II. Rationale (Identify the Need for Change), item E and section III. Course Description (Describe the following), item D require the inclusion of the Alaska State Content and Performance Standards in proposed curriculum change documents.

Though some district-created curriculum guides presented to the auditors were found to incorporate Alaska State Content Standards, most did not. Auditors were not presented with documents that describe specifically how state and national standards were to be included in current curriculum guides.

Characteristic 7 – Assessment Procedures to Determine Curriculum Effectiveness and Use of Data

The need for assessment procedures to determine curriculum effectiveness is referenced in board policy:

- *Board Policy 349 Evaluation*, states “Evaluation of the school program is an administrative function and shall be conducted annually in priority goal areas. To effectively appraise educational progress the superintendent shall report orally and in writing to the Board as circumstances dictate and may require such periodic reports from staff members.”
- Anchorage School District *School Action Guides* include an assessment area for each school goal. “Include the specific measures to be used for Goal #__.” There follows a menu listing of 15 campus-based assessments from which campuses may choose. No specificity as to timeline and/or procedures for formative evaluations is called for or provided.
- The mission statement of the Assessment and Evaluation Department found via the Curriculum, Evaluation, and Instructional Support on the district web page states, “As a public entity, the district has an obligation to assess the results of its efforts and to publicly report the degree to which it meets the goal of providing a good education to every student.”

Currently, the district has no district-wide formative assessments in place for determining curriculum effectiveness (see [Findings 4.2](#) and [4.3](#)).

Characteristic 8 – Approaches to Using Test Results to Plan Instruction and Intervention

The *2002-2003 Goal Statements* found on the district web page list as a goal, to “Ensure public accountability by continued participation in the state-required testing program, through the continued use of the writing assessment in selected grades....”

The *Anchorage School District Commitment* statements also lists the various assessments administered in the district:

- Alaska Benchmark Exams (grades 3-6-8)
- Terra Nova Basic Skills Exams (grades 4, 5, 7, and 9)
- Anchorage Writing Assessment (grades 5-7-9)
- Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam

These various assessments will provide information on the status of student group performance at grade levels 3-10. Additional assessment information was obtained from the Assessment and Evaluation site via the district web page. In addition to the aforementioned assessments, the Student Assessment/Testing Schedule and Information lists included the following:

- Anchorage Developmental Kindergarten Profile
- NAEP
- Math Placement for sixth graders for seventh grade placement.

With the exception of the math placement assessment, no information was provided to the auditors as to how the results of these assessments are used or what types of interventions are used as a result of the assessment findings. The auditors were not provided information pertaining to specific program interventions used systematically to evaluate long-term effectiveness (see [Findings 4.4](#) and [4.5](#)).

Characteristic 9 – Staff Development Program Linked to Curriculum Design and Delivery

School and district office staff provided numerous staff development offerings for teachers, but the auditors found the staff development to lack long-range follow-through to guide the institutionalization of effective instruction, curricular initiatives, new programs, and instructional resources (see [Finding 1.4](#)).

Characteristic 10 – Procedures for Monitoring Curriculum Delivery

Curriculum monitoring is inefficient for determining whether approved curriculum is implemented consistently in classrooms and staff development is applied as intended (see [Finding 4.6](#)).

When administrators were asked how they monitored curriculum, their answers included classroom observation, checklists for classroom visits, lesson plans, assessment results and curriculum meetings. Examples of statements indicating concerns about monitoring and its level of effectiveness taken from district-level and campus site visits follow:

- “Other than the data, we don’t know the level of implementation; for actual – no. Indirectly, we get information when we go in and see a lot of stuff.”
- “Monitoring of the curriculum is up to the principal.”
- “Teachers teach what they want to teach.”
- “We have too much curriculum to teach.”
- “I do a lot of reading about what is going on out there and what the expectations should be.”
- “I know the curriculum and the standards, so I look for things around the room that reflect those things. When I sit in the classroom, I try to clear my mind and see if I can follow the lesson. The books and the textbooks are selected through the curriculum committees and I assume that they pick the right resources.”

Characteristic 11 – Communication Plan for the Process of Curriculum Design and Delivery

A comprehensive communication plan for the process of curriculum design and delivery and celebration of progress was not presented to the auditors.

Interviews with board members, district-level administrators, campus-based administrators, teachers, and parents, revealed some concerns about curriculum management in the school district. A sample of comments includes:

- “Principals have to ask for them (ref. curriculum standards); the teachers are pretty good and aware.”
- “We have not had a lot of feedback from the curriculum department.”
- “No one is looking at the big picture in curriculum.”
- “We need to have a curriculum map; there is no uniform application.”
- “We need to have a better handle on curriculum. We need to be aligned with State Performance Standards. It has to be clear to the system.”

When asked whether there was articulation across grade levels and between schools, administrators commented:

- “We hold monthly curriculum meetings to identify and solve problems and promote program articulation.”
- “The curriculum is what the district folks say it is.”
- “[There is] a real lack of understanding about the curriculum coordinators, when what we need is curriculum coordination.”
- “Alignment of the curriculum is a big issue for us.”
- “There’s not enough continuity in terms of our third grade curriculum in what is happening from one school to another. Before we can provide that continuity, we need to come to a common understanding in terms of essential learning or essential questions. When you look at what students are reading at different schools, it’s all over the board.”

Summary

The auditors found that the Anchorage School district lacks a comprehensive curriculum management plan that provides direction for the design and delivery of curriculum. Various documents were presented to auditors that contain components to provide direction for curriculum, but no single comprehensive plan provides a cohesive approach to curriculum management (see Recommendation 3).

Finding 2.2: Curriculum Guides Are Adequate in Scope For Elementary (70 percent Criterion Met) to Guide Teachers, But Not For Secondary Schools (70 percent Criterion Not Met).

Clear, comprehensive, and current curriculum guides give direction for teachers concerning objectives, assessment methods, prerequisite skills, instructional materials and resources, and classroom strategies. A complete set of curriculum documents includes guides for all grade levels and courses taught in a district. This is known as the scope of the written curriculum. The lack of a curriculum guide for a subject or course causes teachers to rely on other resources in planning and delivering instruction. These other resources may not be in alignment with the instructional goals of the district and/or state. In addition, they may not provide for consistency and focus across grades, courses, and schools. Focus and connectivity by the administration and Board is greatly reduced when decisions involving content and delivery are left to school sites and classrooms functioning in isolation. Fragmentation of the taught curriculum and poor student achievement are often the results.

The auditors examined 24 documents presented by the Anchorage School District personnel as curriculum guides. Documents included district-created guides as well as Alaska State Standards. Information on the district website and in *Program of Studies* booklets (course selection booklets for middle and high schools), provided by district personnel, were used to determine elementary and secondary school subject areas taught and courses offered. The Anchorage School District uses a “framework model” for curriculum documents. A definition was provided in the World Languages curriculum: “framework -- A guide to assist members of the educational community at the local school district-level in the design and implementation of a well-articulated, district-wide curriculum. It is also a guide to assist teachers with student instruction and assessment at the classroom level.”

Exhibit 2.2.1 is a sample listing of guides received by the auditors either by mail or on-site. Documents provided on-site are denoted with an asterisk.

Exhibit 2.2.1 Key Curriculum Planning Documents Reviewed by Auditors Anchorage School District 2002	
Title	Date Published
Language Arts – Student Performance Standards Kindergarten through Grade 8, and English 9 and English 10.....	May 24, 1999
Student Performance Standards Mathematics Kindergarten through Grade 8, and Pre-Algebra, Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II..... Kindergarten-Algebra 2 Math Program Content Standards.....	April 21, 1999 4/21/99
*Cross-reference of ASD Student Performance Standards: Mathematics: Kindergarten through Grade 8, and Pre-Algebra, Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II With State of Alaska Performance Standards at Four Benchmark Levels.....	April 21, 1999
K-6 Science Frameworks - Expanded Version (document marked draft) (Board approved date and Expanded draft date).....	February, 1995 November, 2001
Earth Systems Elementary Science Curriculum Overview..... Remainder of document – pages 3-13.....	Adopted Feb. 1995 Sept. 17, 1997 September, 1996

Exhibit 2.2.1 (continued)
Key Curriculum Planning Documents Reviewed by Auditors
Anchorage School District
2002

Title	Date Published
Science Frameworks – Grades 7-9 Integrated Sciences: Biology I, Chemistry I, Geology I, Physics I, Biological Sciences, Earth Sciences, Conceptual Chemistry, Conceptual Physics, Biology II, AP Biology, Chemistry II, AP Chemistry, AP Physics B, AP Physics C Guiding Principles..... Science As A Process..... 7 th Grade Life Science..... 7 th Grade Earth Science..... 7 th Grade Chemistry..... 7 th Grade Physics..... 8 th Grade Life Science..... 8 th Grade Earth Science..... 8 th Grade Chemistry..... 8 th Grade Physics..... 9 th Grade Life Science.....	 February 8, 1999 February 8, 1999 June 23, 1997 June 23, 1997 June 23, 1997 June 23, 1997 June 23, 1997 June 23, 1997 June 23, 1997 June 23, 1997 June 23, 1997
9 th Grade Earth Science..... 9 th Grade Chemistry..... 9 th Grade Physics..... Biology I Content Frameworks..... Geology I Content Frameworks..... Physics I Content Frameworks..... Biological Sciences Frameworks..... Earth Sciences Frameworks..... Conceptual Chemistry Frameworks..... Conceptual Physics Frameworks..... Biology II Frameworks..... AP Biology Frameworks..... Chemistry II Frameworks..... AP Chemistry Frameworks..... AP Physics B Frameworks..... AP Physics C Frameworks.....	 June 23, 1997 June 23, 1997 June 23, 1997 February 8, 1999 February 8, 1999 February 8, 1999 May 22, 2000 May 22, 2000 May 22, 2000 May 22, 2000 June 25, 2001 June 25, 2001 June 25, 2001 June 25, 2001 June 25, 2001 June 25, 2001
K-12 Social Studies Frameworks (presented as one document)..... Elementary Social Studies Program..... Elementary K-6 Literature..... Middle School Social Studies Frameworks..... Seventh Grade Social Studies Framework..... *Eighth Grade Social Studies Frameworks..... High School Social Studies Frameworks..... Economics Course Frameworks..... United States Government..... High School Social Studies Elective Requirements *Geography/Area Studies (Category A) History/Social Sciences (Category B).....	 May, 1994 May 1994 May, 1994 May 1999 May, 1996 Fall, 1996-97 February, 1998 April, 1997 January, 1999

Exhibit 2.2.1 (continued)
Key Curriculum Planning Documents Reviewed by Auditors
Anchorage School District
2002

Title	Date Published
Music documents provided with the following items: Kindergarten (K1-6) First Grade (1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 4, 5, 6, 7A, 7B) Second Grade (1-8) Third Grade (1, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 4, 5, 6, 7) Fourth Grade (1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 4, 5, 6) Fifth Grade (1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) Sixth Grade (1A, 1B, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)..... Scope for Instrumental (2 documents) Woodwind, Brass, Percussion/Band..... Strings/Orchestra.....	No date provided 1982 1982
Art Department Curriculum Frameworks Elementary Art Curriculum – K-3..... Elementary Art /Curriculum 4-6..... Middle School Art Syllabus 6-8..... Senior High School Art Syllabus..... *Content Standards, K-12.....	Draft June, 1993 Draft 9-10/93 Revised 6/98 Draft June, 1993 Revised 9/98 9/89 11-5-01 Final Draft
Physical Education Curriculum Framework K-12.....	4/97
Health Curriculum Frameworks and Sexuality Education – Guidelines for Instruction K-6, 7-8 and 9-12 (3 documents).....	Last revision date 1/15/97
World Languages Curriculum Framework.....	1998-1999
*Performance Standards – Oral Language for K-12 Grade ESL Students.....	No date
* = Documents provided on-site	

Auditors noted differences between curriculum documents mailed; those provided on-site, both at the district-level and campus-level and those available via the district web page.

For example, in the social studies curriculum binder provided on-site, the following sections not found in the mailed documents were included:

1. Section: eighth grade -- two courses: Introduction to Social Studies 8 #3007; Social Studies 8-Enriched #3008 and course descriptions.
2. Section: eighth grade -- Social Studies Course Frameworks -- Introduction to the Social Sciences 8, Course Number 3007 and Social Studies 8-Enriched, Course Number 3008
3. Section: high school -- In the mailed social studies curriculum the area titled “History: An Integrated World/US Course” is identified differently in the on-site version. On-site it was titled “ESL History: An Integrated World/US Course.” The general course descriptions vary only with the addition of a phrase found at the end of the first sentence of the ESL on-site version, “designed for the bilingual student who is developing English language skills as well as expanding social studies conceptual skills.” History 9-1 and 9-2 course descriptions are the same for both versions. However, the on-site descriptions for History 10-1 and History 10-2 include the phrase, “for limited English proficient students.” They also include course numbers, 302135 and 302235, respectively. The mailed version was annotated at the bottom of each page, “Adopted 1996/1997.” The on-site version was not. However, there was a section introduction page in the on-site version that stated, “May 1996 or May 1997.”

4. Included in the on-site version were matrices for History 9-1, 9-2, 10-,1 and 10-2. Textbook, Videodisc/Software, Lab Programs, ESL, and other recommended instructional materials were also provided.
5. The entire section labeled Area Studies Courses, Framework -- Working Draft Edition, January 1998 was not included in the mailed curriculum. On the back of this section page was a memo dated February 1998. There follows a section dealing with courses which include the following areas for each course: Person(s) working on this Course Worksheet, phone number and School; Course Title; Course Description; Course Goals, Course Objectives; and Course Outline. The following is a list of the courses detailed in this section:
 - African Studies
 - Alaska Studies
 - Asian Studies
 - Comparative Government and Economics
 - Contemporary Problems
 - Environmental Studies
 - ESL Area Studies
 - European Studies
 - Global Geography
 - International Relations: The Role of the United States in a Changing World
 - Islamic Nations Studies
 - Latin American Studies
 - Middle East and Northern Africa
 - Model United Nations
 - North America Studies
 - Pacific Rim
 - U.S. Regional Studies
6. The section dealing with Geography/Area Studies (Category A) and History/Social Sciences (Category B) was provided in the mailed version but was not in the same section of information as the on-site version.

A listing of Materials Recommended for Adoption for Geography/Area Studies was not included in the mailed curriculum version.

The Performance Standards – Oral Language for K-12 grade ESL students, were not received by mail nor are they available online. They were part of a larger document requested on-site by the auditors, ASD Memorandum #219, Subject: Bilingual Education Plan of Service, Appendix C.

Various curriculum documents for the elementary level, kindergarten through 6 grades, are available on the district web page. The curriculum overview and curriculum standards documents in the content areas of literacy (reading/language arts) and science are available on the district web page as presented on-site and mailed. Mathematics curriculum documents are also online with the exception of the Cross-referenced Student Performance Standards document. The Health/PE online documents do not include all of the information provided to the auditors in hard copy. The content curriculum standards areas of social studies, music, and world languages are not available online. The art curriculum overview is online while its curriculum standards are not.

At the middle school level, grades 7 and 8, the standards/frameworks documents available online are literacy (reading/language arts), science, and math (Cross-referenced Student Performance Standards not included). Social studies, art, and music are not accessible online. No reference is made to world languages or elective courses in this area. However, they are included in the *Program of Studies*

booklet, which describes all the courses offered at the middle schools. A booklet dated 2002 was provided on-site to the auditors. The online version is dated 2001.

The standards/frameworks documents for the high schools, grades nine through twelve, are provided online for the content areas of literacy, math, and science. Social studies high school curriculum is not accessible online. The *Program of Studies* booklet for high school courses dated 2001 was available online and a hard copy was provided during the site visit.

The curriculum areas of Special Education and the Gifted Program are coordinated under the Special Education Department in the Anchorage School District. The auditors were not provided with curriculum documents for these two areas. General program descriptions are offered and program emphasis is stated on the Special Education web page via the Departments section of the district web page.

Two elementary schools provided auditors with their Integrated Curriculum versions during the campus site visits. These campus-based curriculum documents were staff developed with facilitation by the principals. One campus offered a monthly compilation of topics/activities for K-5 under the following areas: cultural and cooperative learning strategies, special activities songs, math, social studies, science, health, and whole group reading/language arts. The other campus used a timeline/sequence approach to define when curriculum topics would be taught.

The auditors reviewed district policies to determine if the courses required by state statute, State Board of Education, and local board policy are being taught. The following policies (see [Finding 1.1](#)) define the program of instruction:

- *Board Policy 341 The Curriculum* states, “The program of instruction in the schools shall be based on locally adopted standards and shall meet or exceed the requirements set forth by the State Department of Education. The Board shall approve the curriculum and the major instructional materials.”
- *Board Policy 341.1 Course of Studies* states, “A program of studies book for each level will be published annually and describe the curricular offerings.”
- *Board Policy 341.1 Course of Studies* also requires, “The elementary curriculum shall include language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, art, health, music, physical education, and library skills.”

In the Anchorage School District booklet, “Anchorage School District Curriculum Overview, kindergarten to grade 6, adopted September 2001,” the following curricular offerings are cited: reading, language arts, math, science, social studies, health, music, art, and physical education.

As can be ascertained, there exists an inconsistency between what is stated in board policy regarding the required elementary curriculum and the elementary curriculum offerings published in the Board-required annual curricular offerings publication.

In addition, board policy requires differentiated curriculum for special needs populations.

- *Board Policy 341 The Curriculum* states, “Acceleration, enhancement and/or differentiation of the regular curriculum, including Honors, Advanced Placement, Special Education, and ESL classes, will be incorporated into the curriculum.”

Curriculum guides were requested from the Anchorage School District for each course or subject offered. Auditors expect to find guides for all subjects and courses. Auditors determine that if 70 percent or more of the courses offered have curriculum documents, the scope of the written curriculum is considered adequate. This finding deals only with the scope or coverage of the written curriculum. The quality of the curriculum guides is addressed in [Finding 2.3](#).

[Exhibit 2.2.2](#) indicates whether guides are available for each of the curriculum areas and grade levels for kindergarten through grade 6 as per board policy.

Exhibit 2.2.2
 Scope of Written Curriculum by Subject Area and by Grade Level
 Elementary Schools Grade K-6
 Anchorage School District
 2002

Curriculum Area	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Courses Offered	Curriculum Guides Presented
Language Arts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7	7
Mathematics	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7	7
Social Studies	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7	7
Science	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7	7
Art	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7	7
Health	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7	7
Music	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7	7
Physical Education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7	7
Library Skills	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	7	0
Total								63	56
Percentage									88%

Key: X = Guide Available; O = Guide Not Provided/Available

Exhibit 2.2.2 indicates eight of the nine elementary subjects approved by the Anchorage School District School Board, at grades k-6, have curriculum guides, or 88 percent. Auditors concluded the scope of the elementary curriculum is adequate. However, differentiated curriculum for bilingual, ESL, special education, and gifted students were not provided (see [Finding 3.2](#) and [4.1](#)).

The following board policies cite the subjects and expectations at the middle and high school levels:

- *Board Policy 341.1 Course of Studies* requires, “The secondary courses will include language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, world languages, career technology, fine arts, physical education, and health. Additional electives in the middle schools may be offered, pending approval of Middle School Executive Director.

The most recent publication of the Anchorage School District booklet *Middle School Education, Middle School Program of Studies* presented to the auditors on-site was adopted in June 2000. The auditors used the online version of this publication dated 2001 for audit review. The following core subjects are cited: language arts, math, physical education/health, science, and social studies. In addition electives are offered. The Anchorage School District distinguishes between two types of electives: standard and alternative. Standard elective courses are approved curriculum in the specialty area. They have curricula written and approved by the district. These courses are more traditional in nature and generally have instructors that are specialists in that particular elective area. Alternative elective courses are those offered by individual schools. The curriculum is designed and implemented by the school and teaching staff at each school site. These courses meet student, parent, and community needs. Their availability coincides with staffing. These courses vary from year to year, program to program, and school to school. Standard and alternative elective courses include the following subjects: art, career technology, language arts, leadership, math, miscellaneous topics, music, physical education, science, social studies, and world languages. For the purposes of this review only standard elective courses were examined.

Exhibit 2.2.3 indicates whether guides are available for each of the curriculum areas, course offerings, and grade levels for middle school grades 7 and 8.

Exhibit 2.2.3
 Scope of Written Curriculum by Subject Area, Course, and Grade Level
 Middle Schools Grades 7-8
 Anchorage School District
 2002

Course	7	8	Courses Offered	Curriculum Guides Presented
Core Subjects				
Language Arts	X	X	2	2
Language Arts Gifted	X	X	2	0
Language Arts ESL Beginning	X	X	2	2
Language Arts ESL Intermediate	X	X	2	2
Language Arts ESL Advanced	X	X	2	2
Language Arts Special Education	X	X	2	0
Math	X	X	2	2
Pre-Algebra	X		1	1
Algebra I	X	X	2	2
Geometry	X	X	2	2
Math 6/7/8 ESL	X	X	2	0
Math Special Education	X	X	2	0
Physical Education	X	X	2	2
P.E. Special Education	X	X	2	0
Health	X	X	2	2
Integrated Science	X	X	2	2
Integrated Science Gifted	X	X	2	0
Integrated Science Spanish Immersion	X	X	2	0
Integrated Science Special Education	X	X	2	0
Social Studies	X	X	2	2
Social Studies Japanese Immersion	X	X	2	0
Social Studies Spanish Immersion	X	X	2	0
Social Studies ESL	X	X	2	0
Social Studies Special Education	X	X	2	0
Standard Electives				
Art Exploratory	X		1	1
Art Expanded		X	1	1
Career Technology				
Applied Technology	X	X	2	0
Business Technology	X	X	2	0
Family and Consumer Science	X	X	2	0
Music				
Beginning Chorus	X	X	2	0
Intermediate Chorus	X	X	2	0
Advanced Chorus	X	X	2	0
Beginning Band	X	X	2	0
Intermediate Band Level I	X	X	2	0
Intermediate Band Level II	X	X	2	0
Advanced Band	X	X	2	0
Jazz Band	X	X	2	0
Intermediate Orchestra Level I	X	X	2	0
Intermediate Orchestra Level II	X	X	2	0
Intermediate Orchestra Level III	X	X	2	0
Concert Orchestra	X	X	2	0

Exhibit 2.2.3 (continued)				
Scope of Written Curriculum by Subject Area, Course, and Grade Level				
Middle Schools Grades 7-8				
Anchorage School District				
2002				
Course	7	8	Courses Offered	Curriculum Guides Presented
Core Subjects				
World Languages				
French IA	X	X	2	2
French IB	X	X	2	2
German IA	X	X	2	2
German IB	X	X	2	2
Japanese IA	X	X	2	2
Japanese IB	X	X	2	2
Japanese Immersion 7	X		1	1
Japanese Immersion 8		X	1	1
Russian IA 7,8	X	X	2	
Russian IB 7,8	X	X	2	
Spanish IA	X	X	2	2
Spanish IB	X	X	2	2
Spanish Immersion 8		X	1	1
Total			102	48
Percentage				47%
Key: X = Guide Available O = Guide Not Provided/Available Blank Space = Course not offered at grade level				

As can be noted in [Exhibit 2.2.3](#), 48 of the 102 middle school course offerings at grades 7 and 8, have curriculum guides, or 47 percent. Auditors concluded the scope of the middle school curriculum does not meet the minimum audit standard of 70 percent and is inadequate to provide direction for instructional planning.

[Exhibit 2.2.4](#) shows whether guides are available for each of the curriculum areas, as defined by departments, and course offerings at the high school level.

Exhibit 2.2.4			
Distribution of High School Curriculum Guides by Department			
High Schools Grades 9-12			
Anchorage School District			
2002			
Departments	Number of Courses	Number with Guides	Percent
Art	13	13	100
Business/Marketing Education	18	15	83
Computers	6	0	0
English As A Second Language	46	16	35
Family and Consumer Sciences	10	10	100
Industrial Technology	15	9	60
JROTC	24	0	0
Language Arts	62	7	11
Mathematics	46	20	44
Music	30	0	0
Physical Education/Health	41	1	.02

Exhibit 2.2.4 (continued)			
Distribution of High School Curriculum Guides by Department			
High Schools Grades 9-12			
Anchorage School District			
2002			
Departments	Number of Courses	Number with Guides	Percent
Science	64	42	66
Social Studies	67	47	70
World Languages	75	75	100
Total	517	255	
Percentage			49%
Key: X = Guide Available O = Guide Not Provided/Available E = Elective Courses, Guides Not Provided/Available Blank Space = Course not offered at grade level			

As evidenced in [Exhibit 2.2.3](#), there were inconsistencies in the courses offered and the curriculum guides made available to the auditors for grades 9-12. Of the high school courses, 255 of the 517 have curriculum guides, or 49 percent. This is well below the 70 percent minimum audit standard.

During the interviews, several Anchorage School District administrative staff, campus-based administrators and teachers commented on the lack of written curriculum guides, the over-abundance of information in some guides, and the inconsistent use of curriculum guides. Their representative comments follow:

- “We don’t have a unified district course catalog so that schools don’t enter courses that haven’t been approved by the School Board.”
- “Nobody helps me know what has to give when there is too much in the curriculum.”
- “We have been focusing on standards. Standards drive instruction.”
- “Teachers may have them available (curriculum guides), it depends on the campus. All the math department chairs and middle school and high school teachers have them. It’s totally up to the campus site how guides are used.”
- “As a whole, the district needs to do more work in all areas of the curriculum. They especially have to be more aware of the Cultural Standards.”
- “The Performance Standards made a big difference; one campus redid the curriculum for extra support to students below level.”
- “Teachers are teaching what they want to teach right now.”
- “If it’s not part of the state standards and not tested, it isn’t important.”
- “Teachers have their copies of curriculum guides. They mainly use the manuals that go with the guides.”
- “The teacher has virtually total freedom on what they cover at the middle school level.”

Summary

In summary, without a written curriculum to guide teachers, inconsistency in the taught curriculum hinders student achievement. Curriculum guides for all subjects and at all grade levels serve as work plans for teachers to use in their classrooms. They provide objectives, alignment to state and national standards, activities, lists of materials, ties to technology software and other instructional tools, and assessments of student learning. Overall, the scope of the written curriculum in the Anchorage School District is adequate for grades kindergarten through six, but inadequate for grades 7-12 to enable the Board to establish local control (see [Recommendations 1 and 3](#), and [Finding 3.1](#)).

Finding 2.3: Curriculum Guides Are Inadequate in Design Quality to Guide Teaching Effectively and Inadequate to Promote Deep Alignment. While Connected to the Alaskan Content Standards, There is Insufficient Specificity to Ensure Consistently High Achievement for All Students.

Quality curriculum guides connect the written, taught, and tested curriculum. They focus instruction on essential learnings so that the efforts of all teachers are coordinated in achieving the educational priorities of the system. The documents provide purpose and direction, communicate instructional objectives, align objectives to the tested curriculum, specify necessary prerequisite skills, list instructional materials, and provide strategies for teaching (see [Finding 4.3](#)). They connect the curriculum vertically and horizontally within the school organization. The written curriculum should be user-friendly, providing strong support for daily lessons. When guides are incomplete or nonexistent (see [Finding 2.2](#)), teachers must make many instructional decisions without the benefit of the previously established consensus as to intentions, priorities, techniques, materials, evaluations, and other issues. In such circumstances, instruction is likely to be inconsistent among teachers and schools, inefficient, and confusing for students and other stakeholders. Complete curriculum guides also include suggestions for approaching instruction of key concepts.

The auditors found board policies describing in general what the content of the curriculum document should be (see [Finding 1.1](#)).

- *Board Policy 341 The Curriculum* states, “The program of instruction in the schools shall be based on locally adopted standards and shall meet or exceed the requirements set forth by the State Department of Education. The Board shall approve the curriculum and the major instructional materials. The standard curriculum is intended to challenge and stimulate students. Academic programs to meet the needs of advanced students shall be established within the Anchorage School District. Acceleration, enhancement, and/or differentiation of the regular curriculum, including Honors, Advanced Placement, Special Education, and ESL classes, will be incorporated into the curriculum.”
- *Board Policy 341.1 Course of Studies* requires, “The secondary courses will include language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, world languages, career technology, fine arts, physical education, and health. Additional electives in the middle schools may be offered, pending approval of Middle School Executive Director. The elementary curriculum shall include language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, art, health, music, physical education, and library skills.”

The auditors examined 15 elementary and secondary documents presented as curriculum guides by the Anchorage School District personnel. These guides included district-developed guides, *State Content and Performance Standards*, *Cultural Standards*, and draft curriculum documents. In addition, separate curriculum documents were reviewed by the auditors as extensions to the guides. Curriculum guides and these extensions were reviewed and rated on whether they contained the elements of each of five audit criteria that support effective delivery of the curriculum. Those criteria and their elements are listed in [Exhibit 2.3.1](#).

Exhibit 2.3.1 Curriculum Guide Audit Criteria Anchorage School District 2002	
Criteria	Description
One	Clarity and Validity of Objectives 0. No goals/objectives present 1. Vague delineation of goals/learner outcomes 2. States tasks to be performed or skills/concepts to be learned 3. States for each objective the what, when (sequence within course/grade), how actual standard is performed, and amount of time to be spent learning
Two	Congruity of the Curriculum to Testing/Evaluations 0. No evaluation approach 1. Some approach of evaluation stated 2. State skills, knowledge, concepts which will be assessed 3. Each objective is keyed to district and/or state performance evaluation
Three	Delineation of the Prerequisite Essential Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes 0. No mention of required skill 1. States prior general experience needed 2. States prior general experience needed in specified grade level 3. States specific documented prerequisite or description of discrete skills/concepts required prior tot his learning
Four	Delineation of the Major Instructional Tools 0. No mention of textbook or instructional tools 1. Names the basic text/instructional resource(s) 2. Names the basic text/instructional resource(s) and supplementary materials to be used 3. States for each objective the “match” between the basic text/instructional resource(s) and curriculum objective
Five	Clear Linkages (Strategies) for Classroom Use 0. No linkages cited for classroom use 1. Overall, vague statement on linkage for approaching the subject 2. Provides general suggestions on approach 3. Provides specific examples on how to approach key concepts/skills in the classroom

The curriculum guides were assigned values of zero to three (low to high) on each of the five criteria. A maximum of 15 points is possible. Guides receiving a rating of 12 or more points are considered strong or adequate for meeting Standard Two criteria. The mean ratings for each criterion and the mean for the total guide ratings were then calculated.

Exhibit 2.3.2 shows the auditors’ ratings of grades K-12 curriculum guides examined.

Exhibit 2.3.2 Auditors’ Ratings of Available Curriculum Guides Anchorage School District 2002								
Curriculum Guide	Date (most recent)	Grade	Audit Criteria					Guide Rating
			1	2	3	4	5	
			Obj.	Assess.	Prereq. Skills	Res.	Clssrm . Apps.	
Language Arts	05-24-99	K-8, 9,10	1	0	0	0	0	1
Oral Language – ESL	No date	K-12	1	0	1	0	0	2
Math (3 documents)	04-21-99	K-12	1	3	1	0	0	5
Science K-6 Science Frameworks	11-2001	K-6	0	0	0	3	1	4

Earth Systems	09-1997	K-6	1	0	2	1	1	5
Exhibit 2.3.2 (continued) Auditors' Ratings of Available Curriculum Guides Anchorage School District 2002								
Curriculum Guide	Date (most recent)	Grade	Audit Criteria					Guide Rating
			1 Obj.	2 Assess.	3 Prereq. Skills	4 Res.	5 Clsstrm . Apps.	
Science Frameworks	06-2001	7-12	1	0	0	0	0	1
Social Studies (binder)	01-1999	K-12	1	0	0	2	0	3
World Languages	1998-99	7-12	1	0	1	2	1	5
Health (3 documents)	01-15-97	K-12	1	0	0	0	0	1
Physical Education	04-1997	K-12	1	0	0	0	1	2
Art (binder)	11-05-01	K-12	3	0	2	3	3	11
Music	1982	K-8	1	0	0	0	0	1
Business/Marketing Ed.	03-1998	9-12	2	2	1	1	0	6
Family and Consumer Sci	1997	9-12	2	2	1	1	0	6
Industrial Technology	1995	9-12	2	2	0	1	0	5
Total			18	9	9	14	7	58
Guides Mean Ratings			1.2	.6	.6	.9	.5	3.9

Overall, the currently adopted Anchorage School District curriculum guides do not contain enough information to effectively guide teaching. Exhibit 2.3.2 reveals the following:

- None of the 15 curriculum guides received a rating of 12 points or higher; therefore, each of the currently adopted guides is inadequate.
- The mean rating for a curriculum guide is 3.9 of a possible 15.
- The range of curriculum quality varies from a low of one to a high of 11.
- The art curriculum received the overall highest audit rating of 11, with three areas scoring a three: Objectives, Resources, and Classroom strategies.
- Language arts, science frameworks (7-12), health, and music received an audit rating of one.
- Criterion 1, Clarity and Validity of Objectives (Objectives) had the highest overall rating of 1.2.
- The lowest mean rating was for Criterion 5, Clear Linkages (Strategies) for Classroom Use, .5.

Criterion 1: Clarity and Validity of Objectives

To obtain a “3” under “Clarity and specificity of objectives,” the curriculum guide must specify the amount of time necessary to teach the objectives, skills, and/or concepts; i.e., hour, period, day, or fractional part of a week.

- Most guides consisted of lists of the student learning objectives.
- Reading and writing are assessed on the Alaska State Benchmark Examinations. The auditors noted in the language arts curriculum the Student Performance Standards for grades K-8, 9, and 10 are local performance standards and are not yet aligned with the Alaska Content Standards nor with the grade level-appropriate Alaska Performance Standards.
- Guides did not indicate time to be spent on each objective.
- The mean rating for this criterion was 1.2

Criterion 2: Congruity of the Curriculum to Testing (Evaluation)

To receive a “3” mark on “congruence of the curriculum to the assessment process,” objectives which will be tested must be identified by test. Teachers should know prior to commencing teaching, what

objectives will be tested by what testing instrument so that teachers can align the content, context, and cognitive level of instruction with the content, context, and cognitive level of sample deeply aligned test items.

- Three of the guides made general suggestions for evaluation: the business/marketing education curriculum, the family and consumer sciences curriculum, and the industrial technology curriculum.
- The mathematics curriculum was fully aligned with the Alaska State Content and Performance Standards. However, it should be noted the numerical representations of the standards do not lend itself to a user-friendly document.
- The auditors did note the food science course in the Family and Consumer Sciences curriculum did align that course content with the Alaska Content Standards as well as the Alaska Performance Standards.
- The Health Curriculum Frameworks K-6 also made connections to the Alaska State Content Standards in the areas of social studies and science. However, the format lacked specificity in terms of instructional intent and assessment usage.
- The mean rating for this criterion was .6.

Criterion 3: Delineation of the Prerequisite Essential Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes

The “3” rating for “delineation of prerequisite essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes” requires some specification of prior learnings or teachings. For example, providing a scope and sequence chart in the guide itself will usually obtain a rating of “3.”

- Forty-seven percent of the guides (seven of 15) indicated some general prior experience for curriculum content.
- Two of the guides, earth systems and art, had a scope and sequence, though both required greater specificity grades and courses.
- The mean rating for this criterion was .6.

Criterion 4: Delineation of Major Instructional Tools

To earn a “3” under “delineation of the major instructional resources” requires matching the textbook pages or other materials by page or section to specific objectives or teaching content.

- Two of the guides provided, for each objective stated, the basic text and/or instructional resources to be used, the K-6 science frameworks and the art curriculum.
- Fifty-three percent of the guides at least named the basic text and/or instructional resources to be used.
- The mean rating for this criterion was .9.

Criterion 5: Clear Linkages for Classroom Use

To receive a “3” in the category “clear approaches for classroom use,” the guide must provide specific “cues” for teachers as to how to approach key components of the guide. These key components could be methods, content selection or subject matter, use of materials or manipulatives, classroom environment directive or suggestive, etc. Teachers should have some specific ideas about how to set up the learning environment.

- Only the art curriculum provided examples on how to approach key concepts and/or skills in the classroom.
- Ten of the 15 curriculum guides made no reference to classroom strategies.
- The mean rating for this criterion was .5.

Current curriculum development efforts in the Anchorage School District in the content areas of mathematics, social studies, art, health, and family and consumer sciences are an initial step toward

ensuring alignment of the written, taught, and tested curricula in those content areas. However, overall, the curriculum guides and standards give little information to show the linkage of skills with various assessments either topically or for deep alignment. Continued curriculum development in all content areas and courses, aligned with the state content and performance standards, is necessary to provide teachers with quality curriculum documents to guide their teaching and positively impact student performance.

Curriculum Guide Analysis of State Standards, District Standards, and Instructional Materials

In order for curriculum guides to be of sufficient quality to enable classroom teachers to plan for deep alignment (matching and going beyond the current state accountability assessment in content, context, and cognitive level), the guides must receive a rating of 12-15. No curriculum guide presented to the auditors received this rating. However, the auditors were able to use the sixth grade mathematics guide to conduct an analysis of the extent to which state content and performance standards are linked to district content and performance standards and analyze the degree of alignment among the state and district standards to currently used instructional materials. This type of analysis is critical for informing teachers about how instructional materials must be modified to ensure alignment among the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

Development of state standards started in 1993. This effort has resulted in a listing of state content standards and performance standards. Content standards are listings by content areas of the expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate. Performance standards are measurable statements of the content standards and are used as the basis for the benchmark assessments. Performance standards were released in January 1999. The performance standards are a more specific subset of the content standards and do not cover all of the content standards, but neither the content standards nor the performance standards are written at the level of specificity necessary to produce a high level of alignment among the written, taught, and tested curriculum at the classroom level. For example one of the state content standards in mathematics is, "A student should understand mathematical facts, concepts, principles, and theories." These content standards are written in such general terms that almost all of the teachers and administrators interviewed indicated that they were teaching to state standards. An example of a performance standard in the area of numeration for students aged eight to ten is, "model and explain the processes of multiplication and division. Describe the relationships among the four basic operations." This performance standard is assessed in sixth grade. From this example one can see that the level of specificity of the performance standard is greater than the content standard. Performance standards have been released in only three areas: reading, writing, and mathematics.

Under the direction of curriculum coordinators, work is in progress in all content areas to develop curriculum guides with the necessary specificity to be useful tools for instructional planning at the classroom level. These documents were reviewed by the auditors. An in-depth analysis of the relationship among the state content and performance standards, the district content and performance standards, and district instructional materials was made in the area of sixth grade mathematics. Exhibit 2.3.3 shows the steps in the process used by the auditors.

Exhibit 2.3.3 Analysis of Relationship Between State and District Standards and Instructional Materials Anchorage School District	
Steps in Process	
1.	Identify state content standard
2.	Identify performance standard at a specific level
3.	Review district curriculum for the assessed grade level to determine how the content standard is reflected in that document.
4.	Review district curriculum for the assessed grade level to determine how the performance standard is reflected in that document.
5.	Review the major text used by teachers to determine if the performance standard content is included in the text materials. This is a two-step process. First, one reviews the scope and sequence provided by the publisher to look for a match, and second, one reviews the actual textbook materials to see if there is a match.
6.	Analyze the type of activities included in the instructional materials to determine if there is a match between the instructional materials and the content, cognitive level, and context (format) of the benchmark assessment.

Exhibit 2.2.4 is an example of the results of that analysis. If curriculum guides are of sufficient quality (rating 12-15), many other types of analyses can be done to help teachers deliver instruction to assure mastery of state content and performance standards and assuring alignment among the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

Exhibit 2.3.4 Analysis of Relationship Among Standards and Instructional Materials Sixth Grade Mathematics – <u>Everyday Math</u> Anchorage School District	
Process Implemented	
1.	State Content Standard: “A student should understand mathematical facts, concepts, principles, and theories.”
2.	State Performance Standard: “Describe and use a variety of estimation strategies including rounding to the appropriate place value, multiplying by powers of 10, and using front-end estimation to check for reasonableness of solutions;” (M:A:3)
3.	District Content Standard: “Use appropriate estimation strategies”
4.	District Performance Standard: “6:1 Estimation .1 Explain to what place it is reasonable to round given data .2 Estimate lengths, weights, areas, and volumes .3 Estimate products and quotients .4 Estimate the fractional part or percent of a whole .5 Estimate the measure of angles .6 Round numbers to estimate answers to word problems .7 Use estimation to check reasonableness of results of operations”
5.	Review of Text Scope and Sequence Chart: Estimate sums and fractions (lesson number 15, 16) Estimate products and whole numbers and decimals (lesson number 17, 18) Estimate percent and fractions of a circle (lesson number 20) Estimate products of decimals (lesson number 49) Estimation Squeeze (estimate square roots) (lesson 52) Estimate percent equivalent fractions (lesson 62) Estimate a fraction and percent of a whole (lesson 84) Estimate products and quotients of fractions (lesson 91)

<p>Exhibit 2.3.4 (continued) Analysis of Relationship Among Standards and Instructional Materials Sixth Grade Mathematics – <u>Everyday Math</u> Anchorage School District</p>
<p>Steps in Process</p>
<p>Review of Lessons – Examples of activities from the teacher’s manual Students orally explain strategies including estimation Students orally estimate answers Students explain how to use estimation (orally and short response)</p>
<p>6. The current state benchmark test utilizes three types of test items: multiple choice, short response, and extended response. All responses are written. The lessons in the text called for students to give both oral and written responses, however most of the responses were oral.</p>

From this analysis the auditors determined the following:

- There is a relationship between the state content and performance standards and the district content and performance standards.
- The district performance standards are much more specific than the state standards and can provide teachers with a better understanding of exactly what content knowledge students must have to meet the state standard.
- The instructional materials included a number of lessons directed toward the content. These lessons were distributed throughout the text so that students had a number of opportunities to practice the skills to reach mastery (distributed practice).
- There was a lack of congruence between the format of the test and the format of the instruction. The state test uses three types of questions: multiple choice, short response, and extended response. Most of the lessons in the text asked students to estimate using a classroom oral response. Depending on the teacher’s questioning technique, this could have been done by asking students how they estimate something and calling on students who raised their hands (This is the most common practice used by classroom teachers). This procedure would not enable the teacher to know whether all students in the class had mastered the skill. The test might ask students to write out the steps in the process of estimation or explain why they use those steps. Unless the teacher includes these types of activities to supplement instruction, students may not be prepared to demonstrate what they know on the state accountability test.

This type of analysis is at a very sophisticated level, but it is necessary in order to ensure that all students are at the mastery level of the content, context, and cognitive level of the state content and performance standards and the context of the state accountability assessment. The quality of current curriculum guides is not sufficient to produce these results.

The lack of quality written curricula is evident in the Anchorage School District and is noted at all levels as evidenced by the following comments from staff, teachers, board members, and parents:

- “Nobody uses the whole curriculum, it’s pretty sporadic.”
- “Curriculum guides may be well written but are not utilized.”
- “Teachers don’t use guides. They are aware of state standards.”
- “Our curriculum guides are outdated. They’ve been supplanted by the state standards.”
- “I’ve been here for 20 years and frankly, I wouldn’t be able to tell you how curriculum works.”
- “It’s a mixed bag as to how we formalize standards. I’m okay as long as I can see us meeting some.”
- “The curriculum is fragmented, we need help in this area.”
- “We don’t have anything that says, ‘page 41, standard 2.’”

- “There’s a lot of academic freedom in this school district.”

Summary

The Anchorage School district does not yet provide teachers with clear direction for instruction. Current board policy lacks specificity in defining quality components for curriculum guides. The curriculum guides do not contain enough information to provide teachers with complete and comprehensive work plans to guide their teaching and therefore are not strong guides for directing instruction. All guides reviewed were rated as inadequate when compared topically to the audit criteria. While most guides list student-learning objectives, they do not indicate how the objectives are to be performed or the amount of time allocated to learning an objective. Most guides did not tie the curriculum objectives to state tests or to any district assessments. Few guides showed recommended instructional materials or strategies. Even fewer guides included a scope and sequence or showed prerequisite skills needed. Overall, the Anchorage School District curriculum guides do not contain enough information to effectively promote deep alignment of the written, taught, and tested curricula (see [Recommendation 3](#)).

Finding 2.4: The Instructional Technology Plan Does Not Meet All Audit Criteria and Is Inadequate to Guide Effective Implementation and Integration of Technology in the Educational Program.

Technology is a key element in education that plays an important role in student learning. The potential of technology in the learning process is maximized through sound planning and effective implementation. Board policy that communicates clear expectations and a philosophy that includes a comprehensive view of technology are necessary to effectively direct, monitor, and guide technology efforts.



Students at O’Malley Elementary School in the computer lab.



A student engaged with a computer at Ocean View Elementary School.

Technology plans of high quality include elements that are linked to other district plans and are based on a comprehensive assessment of needs. Implementation effectiveness is ultimately determined by student achievement through measurable student goals and ongoing student and program assessment. Other factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the technology effort include the allocation of adequate resources necessary for implementation and maintenance, as well as sustained staff training in the use and integration of technology in the learning process.

Effective implementation at the school level is also enhanced through district software and hardware standards, use policies; i.e. the Internet, and the requirement of school level technology plans that are coordinated with the district plan to include the integration of school resources such as libraries and media centers.

In examining technology in the Anchorage School District, the auditors reviewed board policies, district plans, and other documents related to technology. They interviewed board members, central office and building administrators, parents, and other community members. In addition, the auditors also conducted site visits at all school buildings.

The auditors found the Anchorage School District instructional technology program inadequate on nine of the 14 technology audit criteria. A three-year *Instructional Technology Plan 2002-2005* was approved by the Anchorage School District Board in April 2002. However, in the absence of a fully implemented plan the auditors observed the availability and use of technology to vary greatly among schools. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of control in the form of board policy or administrative regulation which provides direction to school personnel on such basic issues as common software and hardware specifications.

Exhibit 2.4.1 lists the documents presented by district officials to the auditors for review.

Exhibit 2.4.1 Technology Documents Reviewed by the Auditors Anchorage School District 2002	
Document	Date of Documents
Anchorage School District <i>Board Policy 346.6 Electronic Information Networks (Use of Internet)</i>	June 1996
Anchorage School District <i>Board Policy 346.3 Library/Media, 346.31 Mission and Objectives</i>	May 2001
Anchorage School District Instructional Technology Plan	April 2002
Anchorage School District Memo #262.	April 29 2002
2000-01 School Technology Funding Application (Building)	October 2000

Anchorage School District board policy relating to technology is limited in scope. *Board Policy 346.6 Electronic Information Networks (Use of Internet)* states, “This district is committed to teach students to become proficient and frequent users of the technology necessary for the acquisition of knowledge, their future world of work and communications.” The policy continues by stating, “The Anchorage School Board recognizes that one way to enhance the educational mission is to allow students and staff use of the Internet or other electronic information networks in order for students and staff to participate in distance learning activities, to communicate with others, and to locate material to meet educational development needs. District administrators, classroom teachers, technology specialists, and media specialists/librarians have a professional responsibility to work together to identify information appropriate to age and developmental levels of the students they serve and to instruct students in the appropriate use of this information.”

The only other reference to technology is found in *Board Policy 346.3 Library/Media, 346.31 Mission and Objectives* in which library/media personnel roles are partially directed by language of the fourth objective: “to provide leadership and instruction in the use of information technology.” Interviews with district technology staff indicate the language in *Board Policy 346.3* is outdated in light of Board approval of the Instructional Technology Plan in April 2002.

The goal of the Anchorage School District Instructional Technology Plan is “to support students’ attempts to meet the performance standards in the content areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.” The plan was developed by the Instructional Technology Plan Committee with guidance and direction from an advisory committee. The committees included broad-based representation within the district and the Anchorage community. The auditors reviewed the plan and other technology documents using audit criteria. Exhibit 2.4.2 presents the criteria and results of the review.

Exhibit 2.4.2 Quality Criteria for Instructional Technology Program and Auditors’ Assessment Anchorage School District May 2002		
Program Component	Adequate	Inadequate
1. Board policy or administrative regulation for instructional technology		X
2. Clear statement of program philosophy/vision	X	
3. Comprehensive view of technology	X	
4. Needs assessment		X
5. Measurable student goals and objectives		X
6. Ongoing student assessment		X
7. Ongoing program assessment		X

Exhibit 2.4.2 (continued)		
Quality Criteria for Instructional Technology Program and Auditors' Assessment Anchorage School District May 2002		
Program Component	Adequate	Inadequate
8. Comprehensive staff training with measurable standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment • Application • Integration 		X
9. School site equipment standards		X
10. Internet access standards	X	
11. Role of school library		X
12. Implementation budget	X	
13. Maintenance budget	X	
14. Site plans aligned with district plan		X
Data Source: Anchorage School District Instructional Technology Plan approved by ASD Board of Education April 29, 2002.		

The auditors found the technology program to be adequate on five characteristics and inadequate on nine characteristics. The following were noted:

- Board policies presented to the auditors regarding technology were limited in scope. One addressed Internet usage and the other pertained to the role of library/media. The auditors were not presented with board of education policy or administrative regulations that provided direction, control or guidance to instructional technology.
- The Instructional Technology Plan includes a clear vision statement, "...facilitating and managing the learning environment and fostering lifelong learning," which links to the 2001-02 district mission, "...to educate students for success in life."
- The vision statement also includes a comprehensive view of technology, "...students and staff will use technology to develop critical thinking skills, to communicate ideas, and to access information and to solve problems."
- The plan calls for an ongoing needs assessment in the areas of student technology skills, staff technology skills, electrical and network connectivity, and hardware inventory and use. However, the methodology, timeline, and responsibility for conducting the needs assessment are not included in the plan. The result is a lack of specificity as to how the needs assessment will be conducted as well as a clear plan for the analysis and use of the data.
- The plan includes a Performance Matrix that illustrates the integration and relationship between the Alaska State Performance Standards, Technology-based Performance Products/Projects and Technology Frameworks (Appendix B), Software/Resources, and related Internet Sites. The National Education Technology Standards (NETS) (Appendix E) and Alaska Technology Standards for Students (Appendix F) are also integrated into the plan. However, the plan lacks measurable student goals and a specific mechanism for measuring and tracking the student acquisition of specific technology skills. The plan does include a reference to measuring the success of technology through increased academic achievement as measured by the Alaska Benchmark Exams (grades 3, 6, 8), Terra Nova Basic Skills Exams (grades 4, 5, 7, 9), Anchorage Writing Assessment (grades, 5, 7, 9) and the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. However, the linkage between the acquisition of technology skills and basic academic skills is not clearly defined or documented to substantiate the existence of such a relationship.
- In the plan, program assessment is addressed through the development of "assessments created by a cadre of trainers, using the District's Learning Through Performance Tasks." Provisions for the ongoing assessment of the goals and objectives of the plan are included in the Activity

Plan/Timeline section of the plan (Appendix A). Although the plan calls for the identification of an assessment process, the omission of a specific mechanism and criteria again impedes efforts to measure the effectiveness of the technology initiatives. In the absence of such specificity the effectiveness of the technology effort cannot be assessed adequately and accurately.

- A variety of approaches for staff training are included in the plan: credit classes, web-based support and self-directed learning activities, small and large group training, conferences, and school-based tech support. There is an ongoing activity plan and timeline for the staff training that is linked to a set of teacher competencies. The scope of the training is comprehensive covering the use of equipment, application, and integration of technology into the classroom. Although staff training is an integral part of the plan, there is a lack of a clear evaluation of the effectiveness of the training. There are no measurable standards to determine whether the training will result in staff acquiring the skills specified in the plan.
- School site equipment and software standards are included in the Minimal Hardware and Software Standards for Interoperability (Appendices N and O). These standards describe minimal allocations of resources for buildings and classrooms with hardware specifications where appropriate. Netscape and Explorer are the common telecommunications software packages. Exchange is the standard e-mail application for Macintosh and Windows platforms. Although there is a movement toward common hardware and software standards, there is a lack of board policy regarding the types of software and hardware that may be placed in schools through the donation process. Auditor site visit observations and interviews with Anchorage School District staff indicate there is a lack of site adherence to common school site equipment standards. District officials report that schools may receive donations of computers that are not compatible with these standards.



Third grade Trailside Elementary School students working with computers.

- Internet use standards are extensively delineated in Appendix K – Internet Guidelines. An Internet filtering system resides on the district network and filters at the district-level. The Internet Policy Committee guides Internet use within the Anchorage School District. *Board Policy 346.6 Electronic Information Networks (Use of Internet)* further provides direction to the use of the Internet.

- Anchorage School District *Board Policy 346.3 Library/Media, 346.31 Mission and Objectives* directs library/media personnel, “To provide leadership and instruction in the use of information technology.” However, there is an inconsistent response to this policy by library/media personnel, who reported various levels of involvement in the technology effort to the auditors. The role of library/media personnel are not included in the recently approved plan.
- Initially the technology effort within the district focused on making technology available to students. Staff use of technology is a current priority supported by the Instructional Technology Plan and central office. District administrators report, supported by data included in the technology plan, that approximately 50 percent of the computers in schools “will not support current applications such as Outlook 2001 and the district intranet.” A three year 2002-2005 cost implementation budget is included in the plan. The Board has approved the 2002-2003 budget. Each year the plan includes tech support and a computer service contract to cover maintenance. The plan also includes the purchase of additional computers and a provision for staff development. In their application for Title IID Enhancing Education Through Technology Grant for 2003-2003, district personnel have proposed a spending plan that provides the funds for a comprehensive staff technology training program.
- Site plans for technology presented to the auditors consisted of 2000-01 Instructional Technology TLC Funds Application. These documents were essentially staff development spending plans. They do not link to the district plan, nor is there a provision in the district plan for the development of site plans. District officials reported to the auditors that school site plans were outdated due to the lack of funding of the previous technology plan.

The following comments were made to the auditors by central office staff, building administrators, teachers, and community members during interviews and on-site visitations:

- “Three years ago a technology plan was approved by the Board of Education, only the first year of that plan was funded. The first year of the new plan has been funded with further financial support for the various components.”
- “You are always tapping into your PTA to update your technology.”
- “I now have computers that are good, but in a few years there is no plan for how I will be able to replace them. You can see how quickly they get outdated.”
- “Technology is a huge issue. Right now we have one teacher who is sort of the head of each school. The time it takes from the teacher’s time to do this support is a drain.”
- “Our librarian helps with technology even though it’s not in the job description. We have a five-year tech plan that’s mostly spending.”
- “In the past we had mini-grants for tech staff development, this year there are no classes other than what the district offers.”
- “We made a big mistake by putting it in the hands of students before teachers.”
- “It’s not being used the way it should be.”
- “If a school had construction, [they] could get new computers, others couldn’t.”
- “It’s important that the district start to fund technology; there is a positive energy from the Board and superintendent.”
- “The last plan was about equity, but it was not funded after the first year.”
- “We’ve come a long way. We have a tech list but if people buy outside we can’t support it.”
- “We haven’t given teachers the skills.”
- “School tech plans are outdated. A lot of them haven’t been changed since we offered money a couple of years ago.”

- “The new e-mail system is a mess we have teachers who can’t access it because they don’t have the right computer.”
- “The tech coordinators are supposed to be in schools but they’re fixing equipment all the time.”
- “We converted to new e-mail – it’s a disaster.”
- “We get tech support from the central office. When they are here they end up fixing computers, which is not their job.”
- “The data management system was developed in the 80’s – we’re looking for a new one.”
- “We have teachers doing grades on student computers, which the students can see.”
- “We need to bring this into reality – how many, how much and what can we do with the dollars we have.”
- “Hardware is just the down payment on technology. Haven’t really stepped up to the challenges.”
- “The district has a tendency to buy equipment with construction funds. Works great until funding runs out.”
- “Technology and its coordination in the classroom needs to be examined. A lot of times the lab is sitting there and isn’t being used. I think that the resource is there and it should be consistent.”
- “Computers are not equal. That’s why they have gone to leases to bring in equity.”
- “I worry we aren’t using technology in classrooms enough.”

Summary

The auditors noted a number of concerns regarding the technology effort within the Anchorage School District. There is a lack of board policy to provide direction and control of the technology effort within the district. Various components of the recently approved instructional technology plan lack the specificity necessary to adequately assess needs, measure student achievement, and evaluate program effectiveness. Staff development also lacks a clear evaluation component; teacher participation rather than teacher performance is used as the measure of success. Software and hardware compatibility is lacking, library/media personnel roles are unclear, and site planning does not link with the district plan. Overall, the instructional technology plan does not meet all audit criteria and is particularly deficient in an evaluation mechanism that would measure overall effectiveness.