

## II. METHODOLOGY

### *The Model for the Curriculum Management Audit*

The model for the Curriculum Management Audit is shown in the schematic below. The model has been published widely in the national professional literature, most recently in the best selling book, *The Curriculum Management Audit: Improving School Quality* (1995, Frase, English, Poston).

### *A Schematic View of Curricular Quality Control*



General quality control assumes that at least three elements must be present in any organizational and work-related situation for it to be functional and capable of being improved over time. These are: (1) a work standard, goal/objective, or operational mission; (2) work directed toward attaining the mission, standard, goal/objective; and (3) feedback (work measurement), which is related to or aligned with the standard, goal/objective, or mission.

When activities are repeated, there is a “learning curve,” i.e., more of the work objectives are achieved within the existing cost parameters. As a result, the organization or a sub-unit of an organization becomes more “productive” at its essential short- or long-range work tasks.

Within the context of an educational system and its governance and operational structure, curricular quality control requires: (1) a written curriculum in some clear and translatable form for application by teachers in classroom or related instructional settings, (2) a taught curriculum which is shaped by and interactive with the written one, and (3) a tested curriculum which includes the tasks, concepts, and skills of pupil learning which are linked to both the taught and written curricula. This model is applicable in any kind of educational work structure typically found in mass public educational systems, and is suitable for any kind of assessment strategy, from norm-referenced standardized tests to more authentic approaches.

The Curriculum Management Audit assumes that an educational system, as one kind of human work organization, must be responsive to the context in which it functions and in which it receives support for its continuing existence. In the case of public educational systems, the support comes in the form of tax monies from three levels: local, state, and federal.

In return for such support, mass public educational systems are supposed to exhibit characteristics of rationality; i.e., being responsive to the public will as it is expressed in legally constituted bodies such as Congress, state legislatures, and locally elected/appointed Boards of Education.

In the case of emerging national public school reforms, more and more this responsiveness is assuming a distinctive school-based management focus which includes parents, teachers, and, in some cases, students. The ability of schools to be responsive to public expectations, as legally expressed in law and policy, is crucial to their survival as publicly-supported educational organizations in the years ahead. The Curriculum Management Audit is one method for ascertaining the extent to which a school system or subunit thereof, has been responsive to these expressed expectations and requirements in its context.

### *Standards for the Auditors*

While a Curriculum Management Audit is not a financial audit, it is governed by some of the same principles. These are:

#### **Technical Expertise**

PDK-CMSi certified auditors must have actual experience in conducting the affairs of a school system at all levels audited. They must understand the tacit and contextual clues of sound curriculum management.

The Anchorage School District Curriculum Management Audit Team included auditors who have been school superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, coordinators, principals and assistant principals, as well as elementary and secondary classroom teachers in public educational systems in several locations: California, Iowa, Texas, North Carolina, Kansas, Illinois, Michigan, and Ontario, Canada.

#### **The Principle of Independence**

None of the Curriculum Management Audit Team members had any vested interest in the findings or recommendations of the Anchorage School District Curriculum Management Audit. None of the auditors has any working relationship with the individuals that occupied top or middle management positions in the Anchorage School District, nor with any of the past or current members of the Anchorage School District Board of Education.

#### **The Principle of Objectivity**

Events and situations which comprise the data base for the curriculum management audit are derived from documents, interviews, and site visits. Findings must be verifiable and grounded in the data base, though confidential interview data may not indicate the identity of such sources. Findings must be factually triangulated with two or more sources of data, except when a document is unusually authoritative such as a court judgment, a labor contract signed and approved by all parties to the agreement, approved meeting minutes which connote the accuracy of the content, or any other document whose verification is self-evident.

Triangulation of documents takes place when the document is requested by the auditor and is subsequently furnished. Confirmation by a system representative that the document is in fact what was requested is a form of triangulation. A final form of triangulation occurs when the audit is sent to the superintendent in draft form. If the superintendent or his/her designee(s) does not provide evidence that the audit text is inaccurate, or provides documentation that indicates there are omissions or otherwise factual or content errors, the audit is assumed to be triangulated. The superintendent's

review is not only a second source of triangulation, but is considered summative triangulation of the entirety of audit.

### **The Principle of Consistency**

All PDK-CMSi-certified Curriculum Management Auditors have used the same standards and basic methods since the initial audit was conducted by Dr. Fenwick English many years ago. Audits are not normative in the sense that one school system is compared to another. School systems, as the units of analysis, are compared to a set of standards and positive/negative discrepancies cited.

### **The Principle of Materiality**

PDK-CMSi-certified auditors have broad implied and discretionary power to focus on and select those findings which they consider most important to describing how the curriculum management system is functioning in a school district, and how that system must improve, expand, delete, or re-configure various functions in order to attain an optimum level of performance.

### **The Principle of Full Disclosure**

Auditors must reveal all relevant information to the users of the audit, except in cases where such disclosure would compromise the identity of employees or patrons of the system. Confidentiality is respected in audit interviews.

In reporting data derived from site interviews, some descriptive terms are used which lack a precise quantifiable definition. For example:

“Some school principals said that ... ”

“Many teachers expressed concern that ... ”

“There was widespread comment about ... ”

The basis for these terms is the number of persons in a group or class of persons who were interviewed, as opposed to the total potential number of persons in a category. This is a particularly salient point when not all persons within a category are interviewed. “Many teachers said that...,” represents only those interviewed by the auditors, or who may have responded to a survey, and not “many” of the total group whose views were not sampled, and therefore could not be disclosed during an audit.

In general these quantifications may be applied to the principle of full disclosure:

<b>Descriptive Term</b>	<b>General Quantification Range</b>
Some ... or a few ...	Less than a majority of the group interviewed and less than 30 percent.
Many ...	Less than a majority, more than 30 percent of a group or class of people interviewed.
A majority ...	More than 50 percent, less than 75 percent.
Most ... or widespread	75-89 percent of a group or class of persons interviewed.
Nearly all ...	90-99 percent of those interviewed in a specific class or group of persons.
All or everyone ...	100 percent of all persons interviewed within a similar group, job, or class.

It should be noted for purposes of full disclosure that some groups within a school district are almost always interviewed en toto. The reason is that the audit is focused on management and those people who have policy and managerial responsibilities for the overall performance of the system as a

system. In all audits an attempt is made to interview every member of the Board of Education and all top administrative officers, all principals, and the executive board of the teachers association or union. While teachers and parents are interviewed, they are considered in a status different from those who have system-wide responsibilities for a district's operations. Students are rarely interviewed unless the system has made a specific request in this regard.

### **Interviewed Members of the Anchorage School District**

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Superintendent	School Board Members
All Principals	Teachers' Organization Officers
K-12 Teachers (voluntary, self-referred)	Parents (voluntary, self-referred)
Students (during site visit)	District Office Staff

Approximately 125 individuals were interviewed during the site visit phase of the audit.

#### *Data Sources of the Curriculum Management Audit*

A curriculum audit uses a variety of data sources to determine if each of the three elements of curricular quality control is in place and connected one to the other. The audit process also inquires as to whether pupil learning has improved as the result of effective application of curricular quality control.

The major sources of data for the Anchorage School District Curriculum Management Audit were:

#### Documents

These sources consisted of written board policies, administrative regulations, curriculum guides, memoranda, budgets, state reports, accreditation documents, and any other source of information which would reveal elements of the written, taught, and tested curricula and the linkages among these elements.

#### Interviews

Interviews are conducted by auditors to explain contextual variables which are operating in the school system at the time of the audit. Such contextual variables may shed light on the actions of various persons or parties, reveal interrelationships and explain existing progress, tension, harmony/disharmony within the school system. Quotations cited in the audit from interviews are used as a source of triangulation and not as summative averages or means. Some persons because of their position, knowledge, or credibility, may be quoted more than once in the audit, but they are not counted more than once because their inclusion is not part of a quantitative/mathematical expression of interview data.

#### Site Visits

All building sites were toured by the PDK-CMSi audit team. Site visits reveal the actual context in which curriculum is designed and delivered in a school system. Contextual references are important as they indicate discrepancies in documents or unusual working conditions. Auditors attempted to observe briefly all classrooms, gymnasiums, labs, playgrounds, hallways, rest-rooms, offices, and maintenance areas to properly grasp accurate perceptions of conditions, activities, safety, instructional practices, and operational contexts.

#### *Standards for the Curriculum Audit*

The PDK-CMSi Curriculum Management Audit used five standards against which to compare, verify, and comment upon the Anchorage School District's existing curricular management practices. These standards have been extrapolated from an extensive review of management principles and practices and have been applied in all previous curriculum management audits.

As a result, the standards reflect an ideal management system, but not an unattainable one. They describe working characteristics that any complex work organization should possess in being responsive and responsible to its clients.

A school system that is using its financial and human resources for the greatest benefit of its students is a district that is able to establish clear objectives, examine alternatives, select and implement alternatives, measure results as they develop against established objectives, and adjust its efforts so that it achieves a greater share of the objectives.

The five standards employed in the PDK-CMSi Curriculum Management Audit in Anchorage School District were:

1. The school district demonstrates its control of resources, programs, and personnel.
2. The school district has established clear and valid objectives for students.
3. The school district has demonstrated internal consistency and rational equity in its program development and implementation.
4. The school district has used the results from district-designed or -adopted assessments to adjust, improve, or terminate ineffective practices or programs.
5. The school district has improved its productivity.

A finding within a Curriculum Management Audit is simply a description of the existing state, negative or positive, between an observed and triangulated condition or situation at the time of the PDK-CMSi audit, and its comparison with one or more of the five audit standards.

Findings in the negative represent discrepancies below the standard. Findings in the positive reflect meeting or exceeding the standard. As such, audit findings are recorded on nominal and ordinal indices and not ratio or interval scales. As a general rule, audits do not issue commendations, because it is expected that a school district should be meeting every standard as a way of normally doing its business. Commendations are not given for good practice. On occasion, exemplary practices may be cited.

Unlike accreditation methodologies, audits do not have to reach a forced, summative judgment regarding the status of a school district or sub-unit being analyzed. Audits simply report the discrepancies and formulate recommendations to ameliorate them.