

I. Introduction to the Curriculum Review Cycle for IBSH Parents

As part of IBSH's ongoing WASC school improvement plan, we have been tasked with creating a Curriculum Review Cycle. Each subject area will have a two year focus, until all subjects have undergone the Curriculum Review. We started this process with the Humanities, English, and WSS departments.

Curriculum Review Cycle Schedule:

2011-2012: Humanities (including WSS) Curriculum Maps
2012-2013: Humanities Common Assessments
2013-2014: Math/Science Curriculum Maps
2014-2015: Math/Science Common Assessments

2011-2012 was a big year for the Humanities and WSS departments, which completed standards alignment, Understanding By Design training, and creation of Curriculum Maps.

1. Why align our curriculum?

a. It's better for students:

- Students' learning will be in an appropriate order, building on previous content and skills and preparing for the next year's learning.
- Lessons will not be repeated from year to year.
- Students will not have gaps in content or skills, making them better prepared for their AP exams and ultimately for college.
- High school students will have better information about whether honors or on-level classes are appropriate for them.

b. It's better for teachers:

- Teachers will have a better idea of what they can expect their students to know and to be able to do when the new class comes in at the beginning of the school year.
- Teachers come and go, but the basic curriculum will remain constant rather than wildly shifting every few years based on teacher preference.
- New teachers coming in will have more guidance to create curriculum appropriate for our particular school context.

c. It's better for parents and administrators:

- New parents coming in will have a clearer idea of the level appropriate for their student.
- Administration will know what is being taught at each level, giving them a clearer basis for strategic planning.

2. What is our basis for choosing the best curriculum to put on the Curriculum Maps?

- The IBSH Expected Student Learning Results (ESLR's) are the philosophical basis for what we're doing.
- These will be applied in many ways, but one key way is that we want to see excellence in our AP, SAT, CTP4, and ITBS scores.
- Educational research should be consulted as much as possible. For instance, research shows that more authentic and longer lasting learning happens when teachers teach fewer topics in more detail rather than trying to cover many topics with little context.

3. Why not just teach the textbook?

- Textbooks try to be all things to all people, which means that they are not necessarily aligned to the external tests that we want our students to excel at.
- Textbooks are notorious for being “a mile wide and an inch deep,” which means covering many topics, but not in depth.
- Textbooks can show bias, for instance, ignoring the faults of historical figures or oversimplifying complex reasons why events happened.
- Parents, please do not expect your teachers to cover the entire textbook from the first through the last pages. Textbooks will remain the main resource for curriculum in our classrooms, but with the curriculum maps, teachers will only use the parts of the textbook that are relevant to the standards and curriculum maps.

II. Common Core State Standards

1. Introduction to the Common Core State Standards for IBSH Parents

The standards that IBSH has chosen to align to are called the Common Core State Standards.

The Common Core Standards have been adopted by 45 of the 50 states in the USA, so were a logical choice for IBSH's curriculum alignment, since most of our students go to the USA for college.

Information about the standards from [Common Core website](#):

“The standards are informed by the highest, most effective models from states across the country and countries around the world, and provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live.

These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs.

The standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.”

2. Key Points about the English Standards from the [Common Core Website](#):

Reading

- The standards establish a “staircase” of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. The standards also require the progressive development of reading comprehension so that students advancing through the grades are able to gain more from whatever they read.
- Through reading a diverse array of classic and contemporary literature as well as challenging informational texts in a range of subjects, students are expected to build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities, and broaden their perspective.
- The standards mandate certain critical types of content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, foundational U.S. documents, seminal works of American literature, and the writings of Shakespeare.

Writing

- The ability to write logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence is a cornerstone of the writing standards, with opinion writing—a basic form of argument—extending down into the earliest grades.
- Research—both short, focused projects (such as those commonly required in the workplace) and longer term in depth research—is emphasized throughout the standards but most prominently in the writing strand since a written analysis and presentation of findings is so often critical.
- Annotated samples of student writing accompany the standards and help establish adequate performance levels in writing arguments, informational/explanatory texts, and narratives in the various grades.

Speaking and Listening

- The standards require that students gain, evaluate, and present increasingly complex information, ideas, and evidence through listening and speaking as well as through media.
- An important focus of the speaking and listening standards is academic discussion in one-on-one, small-group, and whole-class settings. Formal presentations are one important way such talk occurs, but so is the more informal discussion that takes place as students collaborate to answer questions, build understanding, and solve problems.

Language

- The standards expect that students will grow their vocabularies through a mix of conversations, direct instruction, and reading. The standards will help students determine word meanings, appreciate the nuances of words, and steadily expand their repertoire of words and phrases.
- The standards help prepare students for real life experience at college and in 21st century careers. The standards recognize that students must be able to use formal English in their writing and speaking but that they must also be able to make informed, skillful choices among the many ways to express themselves through language.
- Vocabulary and conventions are treated in their own strand not because skills in these areas should be handled in isolation but because their use extends across reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Media and Technology

- Just as media and technology are integrated in school and life in the twenty-first century, skills related to media use (both critical analysis and production of media) are integrated throughout the standards.

3. See the Standards

In order to find the standards applicable to your student, click on one of the following links and find your student's grade level. English, Humanities, and WSS teachers will be aligning curriculum and assessment to these standards.

[Download the Standards](#)

[Look at the standards on the website](#)

4. Contact

If you have any questions, please contact the Curriculum Coordinator, Ruth Poulsen.