

# Introduction

## Content

The *Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum* organizes content into units of instruction based on Grade Level Expectations. By design, these units are time-bound. In the order in which they are presented, they address all of the tested GLEs several times prior to administration of the LEAP, iLEAP and GEE exams. Lafayette Parish revision committees re-ordered the units at some grade levels for practical reasons, but still retained the same units presented prior to administration of state exams.

Influenced by Grant Wiggins' and Jay McTighe's process of "Understanding by Design," curriculum developers included the following in each unit of the comprehensive curriculum:

- a suggested time frame for the unit
- a unit description
- a statement of targeted student understandings
- guiding questions that help teachers and students to focus on enduring understandings and skills to be derived from the unit
- specific Grade Level Expectations covered in the unit
- significant instructional activities
- sample assessments, both general and activity-specific.

The comprehensive curriculum incorporates student-centered activities based on GLEs. The activities suggest instructional strategies based on best practices for teaching. The activities are not lesson plans; lesson plans must be created from the suggested activities. Some activities may span several days; some lessons may incorporate more than one activity. Additional activities may be added, and some activities may be replaced, but they should address the guiding questions for the unit. Alternative activities must retain the focus on the specific GLEs and must be of the same rigor in Bloom's cognitive taxonomy as those they replace. The time frames suggested on the pacing charts or curriculum calendars are based on teachers' best estimates. They may be expanded or contracted according to students' needs. This also allows teachers some flexibility in adding activities of their own design. However, all schools will adhere to the unit test dates as planned. Teachers are advised to carefully review the entire year's curriculum calendar to maintain appropriate pacing.

All districts using the comprehensive curriculum have written plans for curriculum improvement so that after each year of implementation the content can be revised to better address students' needs. The state also intends to make revisions over time based on user input. The district requests that teachers use the feedback form provided in this document to report errors or suggest changes. Each English Department should collect the feedback sheets monthly at their departmental meetings and submit them to the Supervisor of English. As the state agency makes corrections, the corrections will be posted on the State Department of Education's website at <http://www.louisianaschools.net>.

## **Special Features of the Lafayette Parish School System (LPSS) Modified Comprehensive Curriculum**

Based on his own research and a comprehensive review of research on reading, nationally recognized scholar Dr. Richard Allington points to the clear link between the amount of reading that students do and their reading achievement (25-33). Independent reading is one feature of the LPSS modified comprehensive curriculum incorporated to insure that students spend daily time in the actual practice of reading. For each grade level, guidance is given to teachers at the outset of Unit 1 for setting up Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) and soliciting feedback from students on their reading.

Teacher tips are included at the outset of the unit as well as in boldface before activities. Throughout the curriculum document, boldface notes indicate where teacher review teams made modifications as well as which activities or parts of activities are optional. In the correlations document, italicized titles indicate that these items are in the teacher's ancillary materials rather than in the actual text or teacher's edition.

An overview of skills for mastery and products for student portfolios is included for each unit in a landscaped format.

### **Project LiFT and the LPSS Modified Comprehensive Curriculum: Three Types of Lessons**

Implementation of the LPSS modified comprehensive curriculum requires that the teacher present multiple lesson types. One lesson type provides instruction that is explicit, direct, and separated – as opposed to integrated. In these instructional focus lessons the teacher provides key information and models skills and strategies. The instructor checks for student understanding, provides additional relevant information to clarify understanding, as needed, and allows opportunities for students to show understanding. This type of instruction targets a particular skill or concept. Based on teacher feedback, the curriculum calendars or pacing charts, no longer identify the topics for each day's skill lesson. However, these lessons may be drawn from the GLEs addressed by the activities. Materials previously developed for Project LiFT lessons on these topics may be incorporated into the focus lessons.

The second type of lesson provides students with practice in a simulated situation that allows them to use knowledge and skills they're acquiring. The students may use the particular skill in writing or a particular skill or strategy in interpreting or responding to literature. Feedback from the instructor is important as the students engage in this type of guided practice that builds automaticity in applying skills and strategies.

The third type of lesson facilitates the students' integration of knowledge and skills in larger, meaningful activities. This type of lesson calls for the use of multiple language skills in reading and writing for an authentic purpose. The purpose, for example, may be to develop and present an original skit, to follow a line of inquiry through a research paper, or to write a short story. Each unit calls for such integration in a culminating product. The focuses and activities in the modified comprehensive curriculum form the basis for all three lesson types.

The eight-step process of Project LiFT will continue to be used in tandem with the modified comprehensive curriculum. But, instead of a disconnect between the explicit skill instruction of the focus lesson and the remainder of the daily instruction, the modified comprehensive curriculum identifies the skills, or GLEs, provides a context in which to teach them through focus lessons, and then provides simulated and integrated activities to help students apply the learning. Periodic assessment will remain, but – based on teacher feedback – there will be only one district reading assessment per unit in grades 6-10 and only four assessments in grades 11 and 12. Students’ writing portfolios with teacher feedback, rubrics, and student self-reflections will also be used to determine students’ mastery of skills and concepts.

### **Implementation Guidelines**

In the second year of implementation, teachers are requested to follow the district guidelines while providing specific feedback to their department chairs on the success of the implementation. Guidelines include the following:

- implement the units in the order in which they are presented (Note: some changes have been made at the high school level)
- follow the protocol for “unpacking” the curriculum with grade-level colleagues to plan delivery of instruction
- be faithful to the content
- use the activities presented unless they are marked as optional, in which case the teacher may select them or not
- address the guiding questions and maintain the same level of cognitive demand when adding activities or substituting alternative activities
- shorten or lengthen the activities according to students’ needs, but prepare students for the district unit tests in a timely fashion
- implement independent reading on a daily basis
- teach grammar and spelling through the instructional focus lessons and in the context of writing and reading
- submit exemplars of student writing to the school’s English department for collegial review and to the district administration for potential publication.

### **Monitoring the Curriculum**

Each district using the *Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum* must monitor its implementation within the teachers’ classes. Monitoring may include administrative review of lesson plans, classroom observations – both formal and informal, portfolio review, collegial review of student work, and unit tests.

### **Improving the Curriculum**

Each year, the district will analyze assessment data and identify and remedy weaknesses in the curriculum. Also, teachers are requested to submit feedback sheets monthly as part of their departmental meetings to report any errors found in the curriculum and to suggest additional

modifications based on students' response and needs. They may also provide feedback to the state Department of Education through its home page at <http://www.louisianaschools.net>.

## **Professional Development**

To insure that teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to teach the *Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum*, the district will continue to provide professional development sessions for teachers to explore the documents and engage in thoughtful, collegial planning using the curriculum. Department and grade-level meetings should be conducted to continue providing teachers with opportunities to revisit their plans, review student work, construct or revise graphic organizers and other materials, select appropriate technological support, and prepare assessments. Teachers are requested to work collaboratively to identify resources within their schools and classrooms.

Teachers in Title I schools are provided the services of a Lead Teacher once a week who serves as an on-the-job mentor. Teachers in non-Title I schools have access to a Lead teacher who provides monthly Saturday workshops, assistance with departmental meetings and mentoring as well, on a requested basis. These Lead Teachers provide support and follow-up to individuals and learning communities on an on-going basis. The purposes of the workshops and job-embedded staff development are as follows:

- to increase teachers' knowledge and skills to provide students with opportunities to meet content standards and academic achievement standards;
- to advance teachers' understanding of instructional strategies for reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and visually representing;
- to increase teachers' knowledge of the academic subjects;
- to increase teachers' understanding of the use of data and assessment to inform and instruct classroom practice.

Professional development is planned with input from teachers and administrators. Surveys of teachers' needs and data reviews contribute to the planning process. The LDOE Web site provides links to standards for staff development, for professional growth initiatives, and educational technology standards. These and other links can be accessed through <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/profdev/home.html>. Teachers are encouraged to explore this site for assistance in organizing school-based professional development opportunities that are rich in content, inclusive, and on-going.

Additional resources to English teachers include the National Council of Teachers of English (<http://www.ncte.org/>), the National Writing Project (<http://www.writingproject.org/>), the International Reading Association (<http://www.reading.org/>), the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents (<http://www.alan-ya.org/>), the Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/>), and the American Library Association (<http://www.ala.org/>).

## **Works Cited**

Allington, Richard L. *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research-Based Programs*. New York: Addison-Wesley Longman, 2001.