**Developing Curriculum Leadership and Design**

Do what you always do, get what you always get.

*—Source unknown*

Ann had just completed a long, arduous revision process for a science curriculum, and she was feeling the satisfaction of a job well done. She had worked with a diligent, broad-based committee of educators for three years. Their hard work was evident by the shiny, new curriculum guides that were placed gingerly on the shelves of classrooms across the district. As Ann walked through classrooms and talked with principals and teachers regarding the new curriculum, she observed, much to her surprise, that little had changed in regard to science instruction, especially in scientific inquiry. Teachers were teaching many isolated activities, but they were not engaged in the process. Ann had spent hours with the team reviewing state and national standards and discussing their implications. The team engaged in an in-depth analysis of the district data and identified the strengths and weaknesses of the current curriculum. Surveys were distributed to parents, teachers, staff, and students requesting their feedback on the science curriculum. So, why had nothing changed?

The status quo was maintained in this district because the curriculum team didn't have any discussions on the best instructional practices. Ann had assumed that the team members already had a solid foundation on these practices, so they jumped right into writing the curriculum. In her haste to get the guides produced, she made a critical error. By not reading, reflecting on, and discussing the best instructional practices, the curriculum team was not equipped to develop a curriculum that would result in long-lasting changes in instruction and student achievement.

## Essential Question

* How do you align curriculum and instruction through the curriculum development process?

When we hear the phrase "the good old days," it is usually uttered with a sense of longing and a fondness for a return to the way things used to be. When it comes to curriculum development, this sentiment would not hold true for many teachers and administrators who have been involved in writing curriculum over the last 10 years. In the old days, curriculum development started with a basic question: "What do we want our students to know?" Fortunately, the question of what to teach has been addressed through state and national standards. But now that state and national standards are tied to accountability measures, the questions needed to develop curriculum have changed. Federal and state leaders have spent large amounts of time and energy painstakingly identifying what and when students should learn something. Now that they have taken care of these concerns, we can shift our focus. Rather than lament what might feel like a loss of autonomy or local control, we feel that this guidance from the federal and state level can help curriculum departments move into an important new era. This new era will allow us to spend more time focusing on aligning curriculum and instruction, rather than developing curriculum guides. We have shifted from focusing on *what* to focusing on *how*.

*The above text is exerpted with permission from “Align the Design” by Nancy J. Mooney and Ann T. Mausbach, 2008, ASCD.*