

## **Is Our Classroom Instruction Consistent with Virginia State Standards?**

A key question for schools to address is whether their students have had an opportunity to learn what their state standards say students are expected to know and be able to do. This is a particularly critical question if students at your school are not performing well on state assessments in any content area. Let's take a look at how the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC) data helps us answer this question.

### **Part 1: Examining State Standards**

#### **Where do state standards suggest we should spend our instructional time?**

The first thing we want to look at is what students at a specified grade level are expected to know and do with what they know. As part of the SEC process, teams of content specialists have coded state standards using a two dimensional grid that includes topics and cognitive demand expectations for students. The state standards are graphed on a tile chart or a contour map both of which show two dimensions. On either graph, the x- axis or vertical line shows the major content topics and the y-axis or horizontal line shows the 5 cognitive demands. The color of the tiles or of the contours shows how much emphasis the content standards give to each topic and cognitive demand. The darker the color, the more emphasis has been given to that topic at the cognitive demand level indicated.

Take a look at your state standards for a specified content and grade level and answer the following questions:

**Which topics are most emphasized on these standards? Which topics are least emphasized or not included at all?**

**What cognitive expectations for students do these standards emphasize for each topic?**

**What cognitive expectations receive little emphasis in the standards?**

## **Part 2: Comparing Our Instruction with State Standards Is our classroom instruction aligned with state standards?**

Now we will want to examine whether our grade level instruction was aligned with these state standards. The results of the SEC Instructional Content survey provide school teams and individual teachers the data to answer this question.

On the survey, teachers were asked to report what topics they taught, how much time they spent on each, and what cognitive expectations they had for each topic. The results are posted online in the same tile chart or contour map format that were used to graph state standards. Let's explore what your team can learn from your data. Before you look at your data, you might begin the discussion by predicting where you would see good alignment with the state standards and where you might not. After this discussion, make sure everyone has a consistent understanding of how to read the graphs. Then take a look at the tile chart or contour map that compares your team's instruction on the coarse grain topics with your state standards to answer the following questions:

**On what topics has your team spent the most instructional time?  
How does that align to state standards?**

**On what topics has your team spent the least instructional time?  
How does that align to state standards?**

**What cognitive expectations for students did teachers include in their instruction for each topic taught? How does that align to state standards?**

When you have finished examining the coarse grain instructional content chart, you will next want to examine the fine grain charts. For each of the coarse grain topics, there is a corresponding set of fine grain topics. By asking the same questions you asked about the coarse grain chart, you will develop a deeper understanding of where your instruction is aligned to state standards and where it is not.

## **Fine Grain Graph Topic: Comprehension**

Looking at the tile chart or contour map that compares your team's instruction on the following fine grain topic with your state standards, answer the following questions:

**On what topics has your team spent the most instructional time?  
How does that align to state standards?**

**On what topics has your team spent the least instructional time?  
How does that align to state standards?**

**What cognitive expectations for students did teachers include in their instruction for each topic taught? How does that align to state standards?**

## **Fine Grain Graph Topic: Critical Reasoning**

Looking at the tile chart or contour map that compares your team's instruction on the following fine grain topic with your state standards, answer the following questions:

**On what topics has your team spent the most instructional time?  
How does that align to state standards?**

**On what topics has your team spent the least instructional time?  
How does that align to state standards?**

**What cognitive expectations for students did teachers include in their instruction for each topic taught? How does that align to state standards?**

### **Part 3: Comparing My Instruction with State Standards** **Is my classroom instruction aligned with our state standards?**

The aggregate results for your team may look different than your individual data. You will want to see how close your own instruction is to state standards. Take a few minutes to see what you can learn from looking at your own individual data (which is confidential unless you choose to share it) and answer the following questions:

**What am I teaching that is aligned with our state standards?**

**Am I teaching anything that is not emphasized on state standards?**

**What am I not teaching that state standards indicate I should be teaching?**

**Are my cognitive expectations for students aligned with the cognitive expectations indicated in the standards? If not, where is the misalignment?**

## **Part 4: Next Steps**

### **What do we need to change about our instruction as a result of this data?**

After you have analyzed your SEC data, your team will want to reflect on these questions:

- Are there reasons that a teacher may spend more or less time on a topic than their standards indicate?
- What is the impact of teaching not being aligned to state standards?
- What is the impact of cognitive expectations not being aligned to state standards?

It is the game plan that schools put into place after they have analyzed their SEC and achievement data that will ensure the time and effort put into the SEC process will result in improved student achievement. Based on your data analysis, what does your team need to do next? Develop a game plan that addresses the following questions:

### **What do we need to change about our instruction as a result of this data?**

### **How would we monitor that our instruction is aligned with state standards?**

### **How would we monitor that students are reaching a proficient performance on state standards?**