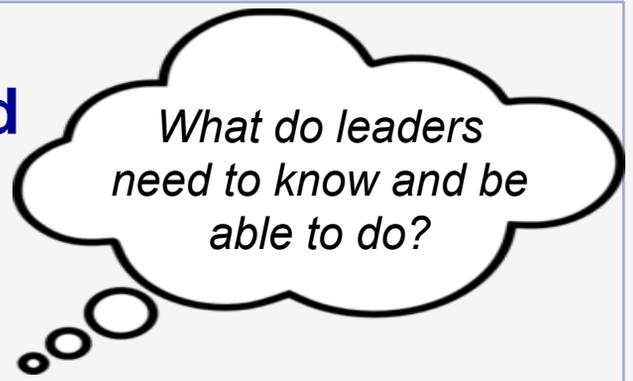


# Critical Question #1

## What do students need to know, understand, and be able to do? (Plan)

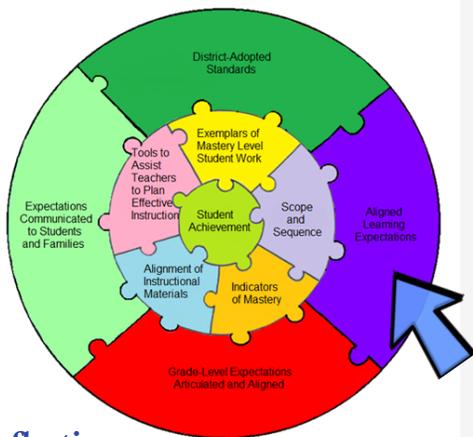


**Fundamental Practice 6.** Learning expectations for all students are identified, organized, and described around prepared-graduate competencies and the “big ideas” that connect expectations and standards.

Beyond adopting standards, districts must organize concepts and skills around the big ideas that frame the standards for every student to learn and demonstrate at a mastery level. This is accomplished through a district-developed curriculum which is an organized plan of instruction for engaging students in mastering the standards. Even with a reduction of standards, grade-level expectations, and evidence outcomes in the new Florida Standards, it is still important that districts organize learning goals around big ideas and identify which goals all students should master at designated points in time. Organizing these concepts and skills for all grade level expectations allows educators to make certain that all students are afforded adequate and equitable opportunities to learn, i.e., what Marzano (2003) describes as guaranteed and viable. Without a district identifying what concepts or skills are the focus for a given unit or period of time, teachers find themselves either struggling to “cover” standards or making personal decisions about what is most important for students to learn at any point in time. Such prospects, by definition, deprive students of a guaranteed and viable curriculum and leave teachers in the untenable situation of being unable to teach the curriculum to mastery.

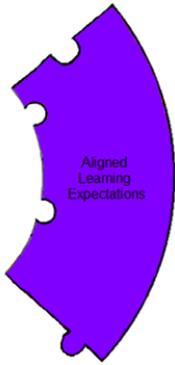
### Guiding Questions:

- Are grade-level expectations and evidence outcomes identified and organized for all grades and content areas?
- What criteria are used to organize grade-level expectations and evidence outcomes in the district’s curriculum documents?
- How does the district ensure administrators and teachers know, understand, and teach those concepts and skills expected for their grade or content area?
- How do schools effectively communicate to students the outcomes they are expected to learn or the type of performance they must demonstrate?



### Reflections:

1. As a leader, what is my role in ensuring this fundamental practice is taking place in my district and schools?
2. What are current barriers that are getting in the way of successfully implementing this fundamental practice systemically in my district and schools?
3. When I return to my district/school, I will complete the following three action steps to begin enhancing our (my and my staff’s) application of this fundamental practice:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_



In order to ensure that grade-level expectations and evidence outcomes are identified and organized for all grades and content areas, school administrators need to be actively involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment activities at the classroom level. Marzano, Waters and McNulty identify specific behaviors and characteristics associated with this responsibility in their *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results* including being directly involved in helping teachers design curricular activities as well as addressing assessment and instructional issues.

**So how does a principal put this into practice?**

- Consider how you monitor instruction. Meet with your teachers to evaluate whether their dominant instructional practice meets the critical needs articulated in your school goals and in the individual goals your teachers monitor for their students. In addition, determine whether or not they're delivering the instruction that was part of the intended curriculum. As you monitor, keep questions like these in mind: Where should they begin in their instructional sequence? How can teachers avoid wasting time teaching material the students already know?
- Review artifacts of learning with teachers. Focusing on the standards and the instructional shifts as the criteria helps teachers measure children not against their group, but against more objective criteria.
- Participate in collaborative planning with teachers. Teachers must develop new, standards-aligned instructional units and lessons and identify new resources that they may not have used in the past.

**Five Action Steps to Implementing a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum.**

1. Identify and communicate the content considered essential for all students versus that considered supplemental or necessary only for those seeking postsecondary education.
2. Ensure that the essential content can be addressed in the amount of time available for instruction.
3. Sequence and organize the essential content in such a way that students have ample opportunity to learn it.
4. Ensure that teachers address the essential content.
5. Protect the instructional time that is available.

As an instructional leader, you can facilitate these transitions and ensure that the cognitive complexity of planned lessons and units match the intended cognitive complexity of standards by encouraging and supporting a collaborative planning effort.

**References**

Marzano, R. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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