New York State Education Department

A Resource for Understanding the Relationships Between the State Standards and the Prekindergarten-3rd Grade Instructional Cycle

This resource offers teachers and leaders a structure for discussing the relationships and distinctions among learning standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment within the context of prekindergarten 3rd grade.

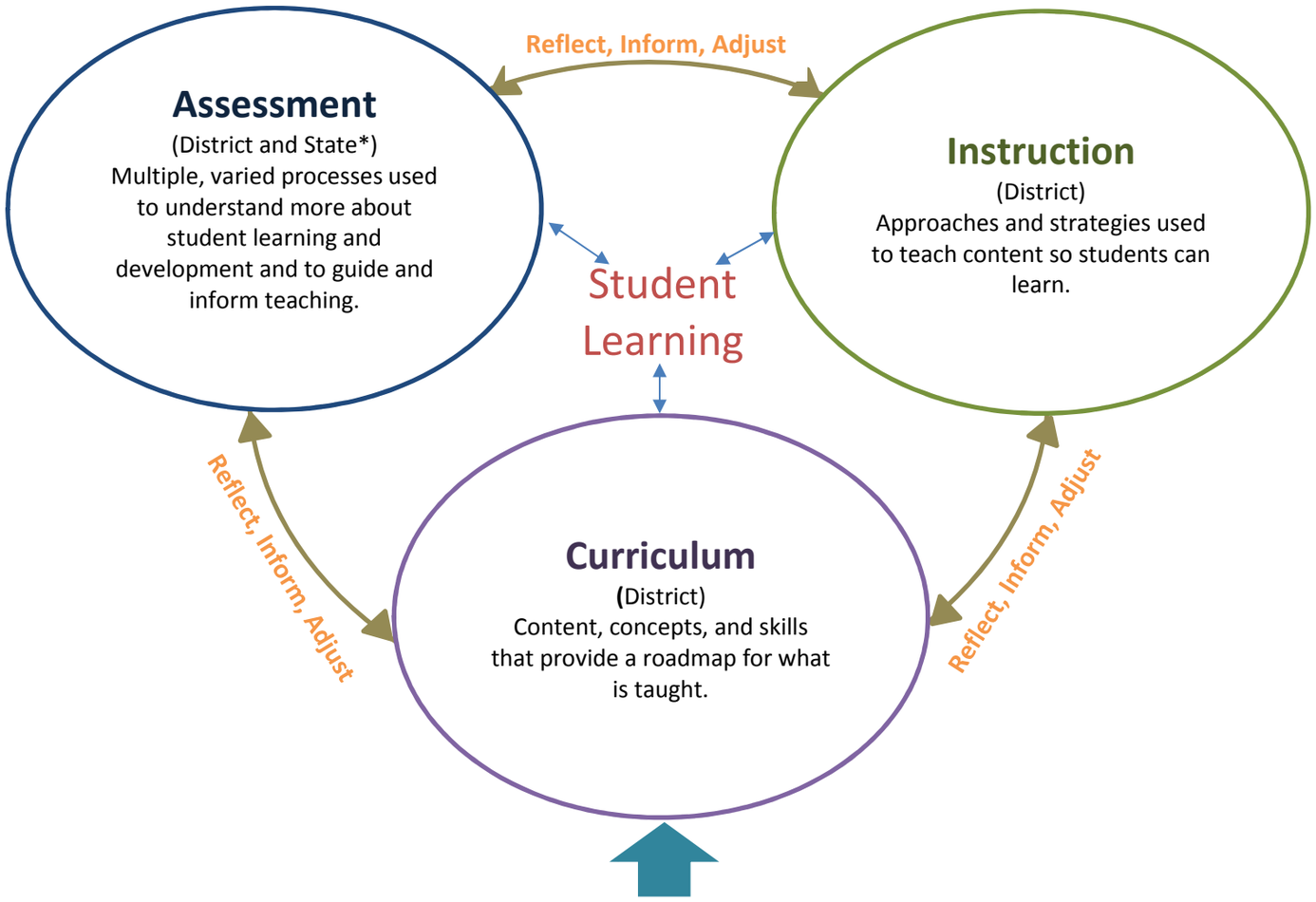
At the center of the model is student learning, surrounded by three elements that support the instructional cycle. The arrows signify the cyclical nature of teaching and learning and remind us that each element is connected and linked to the others. Importantly, the double arrows between student learning and the three elements remind us that students are active participants and at the core of the instructional process. Understanding who students are, what they know and are able to do are essential to providing instruction that is individualized, differentiated, culturally and linguistically relevant, and context based. At the base of the cycle are learning standards, which provide a framework for local curricular planning.

The back of this page provides narrative descriptions of each element, what they do and how they connect, and links to resources.

Alignment and Coherence

The elements depicted in the graphic work together in multiple ways and operate as a system. State learning standards provide a framework for districts to develop and vertically and horizontally align local curriculum. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment function together in an ongoing manner, where one regularly informs the other in a plan teach reflect adjust pattern to support student learning.

* State Assessments Grades 3 8 ELA and Math; Grades 4 and 8 Science



A Resource for Understanding the Relationships Between the State Standards and the P-3 Instructional Cycle		
	What They Are	**What They Do and How They Connect**
Standards	New York State-developed student learning goals (knowledge and skills) which are outlined by subjects and/or courses, domains, grades, and/or grade bands. New York State's first learning standards were developed in 1996 and several standard areas have undergone revisions since that time.	Standards are the "where are we going" or destination of the instructional cycle. State standards articulate a learning progression of what students can learn and do at various stages along a continuum as a result of instruction and learning experiences. They provide a framework for districts and local programs to develop local curricula and plan instruction that is individualized, differentiated, culturally and linguistically relevant, and context-based. While state standards articulate learning goals for all children, they are not designed to prescribe a lockstep progression of lessons or curricula for all children since each child's pace of development is not uniform and is not expected to be. Some children may move past some standards while moving towards others. State standards can provide a basis for informing assessments to help determine where students are along that continuum and to inform instructional approaches. New York State provides a prekindergarten supplement, aligned to the K-12 standards, which includes additional standards for: Approaches to Learning; Physical Development and Health; Social and Emotional Development; Communication, Language and Literacy; and Cognition and Knowledge of the World (math, science, social studies, the arts, technology). https://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-prekindergarten-foundation-for-the-common-core
Curriculum	Locally-determined standards-based roadmap that outlines the content of what is going to be taught. Curriculum includes content, lessons, subject matter, themes, units of study, learning experiences, and courses (in upper middle and high school) that are designed to achieve long range learning goals for students.	Curriculum is the "what" of the instructional cycle. It includes an outline of the content, concepts, and skills that are going to be taught. Curriculum should have a flexible design to meet the unique needs of individual students, allowing students to work at different levels on different activities. This includes cultural and linguistic contexts of a local community and of individual students. Curriculum planning should follow a developmental sequence within content areas and emphasize robust, interactive, and integrated learning experiences that build on and support students to move just beyond his or her existing knowledge, experiences, and skill level. Curriculum should address all domains of learning and development since they are intrinsically linked and mutually supportive. Social and emotional development, physical development, and approaches to learning play critical roles in supporting young children's learning across all academic areas. Curricula that narrowly focuses on basic skills or relies on drills or worksheets should be avoided, especially in prekindergarten and kindergarten, since they have little meaning to young children.
Instruction	Locally-determined approaches and strategies used to teach so students can learn.	Instruction is the "how" of the instructional cycle. It includes the action of teaching to promote student learning outlined by curriculum and guided by what is understood about individual students. Instruction includes teaching strategies and approaches, scaffolding, direct and indirect instruction, grouping, individualization, differentiation, modifications, and adaptations used while teaching to improve student learning. It also includes utilizing learning environments, interacting with students, creating a classroom culture, fostering student engagement, and embedding social and emotional supports. Instruction should be balanced to meet individual, cultural, and linguistic needs, and build on children's interests and prior knowledge. Hands-on practice and purposeful play are meaningful vehicles for students to understand abstract concepts, hone skills, and for teachers to observe student learning and social interaction. A developmentally appropriate instructional approach is one that is grounded in child development theory and within a socially supportive context (http://www.naeyc.org/DAP). Instruction and assessment are intrinsically connected, ongoing, and cyclical in nature. Teachers use formal and informal assessment strategies to inform teaching practices on a regular basis.
Assessment	The varied processes used to understand more about student learning and to guide and inform instruction. Most assessments are locally-determined. New York State has state-determined assessments for ELA and Math in grades 3-8, science in grades 4 and 8, and the New York State Regents exams.	Assessment is the "where are we now" and "where should we go next" of the instructional cycle. There are multiple types of assessment, each with different functions. Screening and diagnostic assessments determine if a student has a specific learning or developmental need and how to best support the individual student need. Formative assessment is ongoing and used to inform instruction and individualize goals and learning experiences. Summative assessment is used to report information about the acquisition of knowledge and skills, typically at the end of a prescribed period of instruction and is often used to evaluate effectiveness. Summative assessments are not typically used in the early grades due to the nature of how very young children learn. Data gathered from assessments is used to guide and inform curriculum and instruction. Data from ongoing formative assessment plays a key role in the instructional cycle, creating a feedback cycle between student learning and instruction. Teachers use multiple forms of formative assessment (including observation, work samples, and interactions) to analyze students' understanding and progression towards learning goals, modify their instructional practices, refine classroom environments, provide feedback, and connect with families. For young children (P-3rd grade) it is critical that assessment be considered within the context of developmentally appropriate practices (http://www.naeyc.org/DAP).