

Curriculum Terms and Definitions

State Standards: Broad learning goals set by the state department of education that define what students should know and be able to do at each grade level and subject. Standards are applied statewide to ensure consistency in educational expectations. Standards focus on outcomes, not instructional methods. Standards are fixed and mandatory and are designed to ensure consistency and accountability.

Curriculum Guide: Detailed instructional plans created by school districts (curriculum developers) or educators to provide guidance on how to teach the standards. These guides include lesson plans, instructional strategies, pacing guides, assessments, and resources (e.g., instructional materials, references to textbooks, digital resources, community resources, and resources to meet tiered instruction levels and differentiate instruction) that are tailored to meet local needs, school context, and teacher preferences. Curriculum guides are adaptable to teacher/classroom needs and are designed to support effective teaching and learning. This is a narrative or structured document that contains detailed strategies and resources. The document is designed to provide teaching support and instructional tools.

Curriculum Map: A visual or tabular representation (e.g., calendar-style) that outlines what is taught and when across a school year. The purpose of the curriculum map is to ensure alignment between standards, instruction, and assessment across grade levels and subjects. This is a high-level overview for teachers and administrators within a district that helps align content across time and grade levels. This map contains units or topics by month/quarter, standards addressed, key assessments, essential questions or learning targets. It is designed to promote consistency and coherence across classrooms and grade levels and helps identify gaps or redundancies.

Scope and Sequence: Document that outlines the breadth of content and the order (sequence) in which it is taught. The scope and sequence provide a roadmap for instruction over a defined period (e.g., semester, year). It contains a list of topics or units, suggested pacing (weeks/months) and alignment to standards. The scope and sequence are designed to guide teachers in planning instruction and ensure logical progression of content.

Pacing Guide: A timeline that outlines when specific content, standards, or units should be taught throughout the academic year. The pacing guide ensures that instruction stays on track to cover all required materials before the end of the term or year. The pacing guide contains a weekly or monthly breakdown of topics or units, suggested timeframes for each concept, and identifies alignment to standards and assessments. The pacing guide provides consistency across classrooms and schools within a district and helps teachers plan and allocate time effectively. The pacing guide often draws from the curriculum map's scope and sequence.

Course Description: A summary of a course's content, goals, and expectations that communicates the course's purpose to students, parents, and stakeholders. The course description contains an overview of topics covered, learning objectives, prerequisites for the course (if any), and credit information (secondary, postsecondary). The course description is designed to help students and families make informed decisions about course selection and is used in course catalogs and syllabi.

Course Catalog: Comprehensive document or digital resource that lists all available courses for a school year, typically organized by department or grade level. This document informs students, parents, counselors, and educators about course offerings, prerequisites, credit values, and graduation requirements. The course catalog contains course titles and codes (ND Course Codes would be included.), a brief version of the course description, grade levels eligible, prerequisites or co-requisites, credit value (e.g., .5 or 1.0), graduation requirement alignment (e.g., fulfills science or elective credit), and special designations (e.g., honors, AP, dual credit, CTE). The course catalog helps provide curriculum oversight in the district by ensuring all courses offered are aligned with district goals and state requirements (North Dakota Century Code requirements, state standards). Counselors and students may use the course catalog to plan schedules or pathways to graduation.

Course Syllabi: A document given to students at the beginning of a course that outlines expectations, policies, and an overview of content. This document is created by teachers to communicate the structure, goals, and logistics of a course to students and parents. The Syllabi contains a course description and objectives, grading policies and expectations, major assignments and assessments, weekly or unit-based schedules, required materials (including textbooks). The syllabi set the tone and framework for a course and provides transparency and accountability.

Unit Plan: Detailed plan for teaching a series of lessons centered around a theme, topic, or standard(s), typically spanning 1-4 weeks. The unit plan provides a roadmap for a cohesive set of concepts or skills. Unit plans contain learning objectives, overview of multiple lessons, assessments (formative and summative), identify key vocabulary and concepts, resources and materials, and differentiation strategies (Identify MTSS Tier II and III strategies and resources.). The unit provides longer-term instructional planning and are designed to ensure continuity, depth, and alignment across multiple lessons.

Lesson Plan: A detailed plan for a single class session or instructional period. Lesson plans are narrowly focused on one day or one lesson and are designed to guide the teacher through the delivery of specific content or skills. The lesson plan contains learning objectives for the day, identifies materials needed, step-by-step procedures, activities and assessments, differentiation strategies, and timing for each segment. The lesson plan is designed to help the teacher stay organized and intentional during daily instruction.

Instructional Resources: The materials and tools used to support teaching and learning such as textbooks, novels, digital platforms, videos, manipulatives, lab kits, rubrics, graphic organizers, or anchor charts. The instructional resources enhance instruction, support diverse learners, and provide multiple means of engagement and representation. Instructional resources are selected to align with district curriculum guides.

Textbooks: Published ***instructional materials*** that provide structured content aligned to curriculum standards. The textbooks serve as a primary or supplementary ***resource*** for teaching and learning. The textbook contains chapters aligned by topic or unit, practice problems, readings, visuals, and assessments. The textbooks are aligned to state or national standards (Most are aligned to national standards.) This resource provides consistency in content delivery and supports both teacher instruction and student learning. The textbooks are selected to ***support*** instructional strategies and content in the curriculum guide and may be referenced in the pacing guide as a resource.