

# Introducing Canton's On-line Curriculum to the Community

Our venture with on-line curriculum mapping is a 3-year story – one with lots of trial and error and much too involved to relay here! However, beginning immediately, we are happy to open up the on-line curriculum to Canton's parents. Is our curriculum perfect? NO! But, are we pleased and proud to have come so far in so little time in almost every area of the curriculum? YES!

## What is Curriculum Mapping?

Curriculum Mapping came to the forefront of educational thinking in the late 90's with Heidi Hayes Jacobs' book, *Mapping the Big Picture: Integrating Curriculum and Assessment* (1997) and Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins' backward design model for curriculum development, called *Understanding by Design* (1998). In both design models, the teachers begin by defining what they want the students to know and understand at the *end* of the month or unit. Rather than testing kids on what they have just taught, the teachers work "backwards". The assessment is planned *first*, not last. Then, they plan their instruction to match the knowledge and skills their students will need to be successful on that assessment.

Thus, curriculum maps are not intended to orderly schedules of lessons (called "scope and sequences"). Nor, are they intended to be rigidly set in stone! The difference is the Internet. Because mapping is on-line, the maps themselves are flexible. They are changed and saved with each new decision at the team level... or, with each new development in the content area.

Most important, however, the curriculum is *no longer* intended to be a *recorded document* housed in the binders on the bookshelf in the principal's office, slowly growing more and more out-of-date with each new addition and deletion the classroom teachers make. It is housed on-line and edited and printed from a computer. Its main focus is not to *record* the curriculum, but to *report* on it, so that all teachers have access to all curriculums and the mechanism to easily read and discuss what is and isn't happening across the grades. To create data about what is being taught and assessed, so it can be improved upon by a team of teachers. To find our omissions and redundancies and opportunities for cross – curricular connections.

**How do I access my child's teachers' curriculum on-line?**

On the district's webpage ...

Click on the "Curriculum Mapper" link

...any time, from any computer with Internet access.



There are several ways to describe this new curriculum mapping – in some cases, we think of it as a *diary curriculum*, a reflection of the classroom teacher’s plan book and grade book. This *diary map* is the typical model at the high school where courses are often “singletons,” or where multiple sections are taught by only one teacher. Diary maps are generally titled in **blue print**. In other cases, however, we think of the maps as the *guaranteed curriculum*; curriculum which has been discussed at the team level by more than one teacher, and the teachers have all agreed the content of this map will be the *taught* and *assessed* curriculum. This is the typical model at the elementary schools, and these “master maps” are generally titled in **red print**.

## What’s in a Curriculum Map?

---

Our maps vary! Since they are written by the teachers, they reflect the individual choices and personalities of the teachers who write them. But, there are some consistent expectations. We built our own template and our maps should contain:

1. Column #1 -- the essential questions or main idea of the content and concepts being taught
2. Column #2 -- the standards-based essential knowledge and skills
3. Column #3 -- the types of assessments the teacher uses to determine the students’ success with the concepts and skills
4. Column #4 – the multi-faceted resources needed for the month. When “keywords” are included, they refer to the words the *teacher* uses to teach the unit (not a vocabulary list for students).



If you looked at the progression of our maps over the past few years, you would see the improvements made over time. Sometimes, the map was originally written by one teacher and has been edited and revised by another teacher in subsequent years.

## What are the advantages of Internet-based Curriculum Mapping?

---

First and foremost, *Curriculum Mapper* is flexible! Each school can use curriculum mapping to focus on the content area that needs the most attention in a given year. Recently, because of the changes in the State’s Science Frameworks and the advent of the new CMT in Science, we have been able to focus on rewriting the science maps. However, *unlike in the past*, (when a focus on a single subject put a halt to everyone else’s curriculum writing), our teachers have continued to write maps *in*

**It’s flexible!**

*all the other content areas of the curriculum*, as well as the Science. No content area has had to wait for it to be *their year*.

Second, mapping is practical and easily supported! Each teacher has his/her own account, and *thoroughly updating* one month of each map takes approximately one hour a month. We have tried to create *reasonable* expectations

### **It's practical!**

and timelines for teachers, knowing that their classroom planning and evaluation of student work are paramount. For example, a high school teacher who teaches three or four different course preparations simply *cannot* work on each one of those course maps each year. Department Chairs have therefore set priorities within their content areas. Similarly, at the elementary school, we find ourselves concentrating at the team level on one or two content areas per year, such as Reading and Science, recently. However, our investment in *Curriculum Mapper* means that *all* teachers have a direct role in the writing of some curriculum all year long. In addition, there are no printing and binding expenses associated with our curriculum. Any part of the curriculum can be printed any time, any where.



Finally, curriculum mapping is technology-based! Therefore, the principal and teachers can *search* our on-line curriculum for book titles or content strands. For a team-level discussion, the team leader can *print* a single map for analysis.

Or the team leader can *create a report* that combines several maps together, enabling the team to analyze that month's amount of reading or writing homework, for example. Recently, we

### **It's technological!**

used this *search and compare* feature to examine our K – 12 curriculum in social studies, music, art, and language arts on the topic of “Native Americans.” Using the technology, we can *attach* the State Standards or the local standards, without typing them into the map. We can download the maps into Word documents and “hide” whole columns or rows. At the touch of a button, we can create *live* links to Internet resources or *attach* documents, such as our in-house rubrics and assessments. We can *search* the curriculum maps from *other schools across the nation* for similar units or courses. Our curriculum is *accessible* to us, and to you, anywhere there is an Internet connection. Furthermore, it is automatically *archived* from one year to the next, and it's *backed-up* by Collaborative Learning, Inc. four times a day.

## Who, or what, is Collaborative Learning, Inc?

---



Our program, *Curriculum Mapper* is the only mapping tool created and designed by practicing K-12

educators. When the company began, James Westrick, one of the founders, was a high school Chemistry teacher, working just outside of Chicago. Knowing that technology could help his

colleagues as they wrote and discussed curriculum, he designed the first program in his own email account, (hence the original name WestJam, Inc. located at [westjam.org](http://westjam.org)). Once Jim knew he was onto something, he took his idea beyond an extra curricular endeavor, and, with his brother as a partner, the company was born in 1999. Since then, the company has expanded exponentially, this year including the purchase of *WebGrader*, (the standards-based report card which we are successfully implementing at CIS), and the development of *Professional Learning Associates*, for teacher training. Together, these three businesses make up *Collaborative Learning, Inc.* which supports curriculum mapping efforts in every US state and Canada.