

4 pillars of principled curriculum design

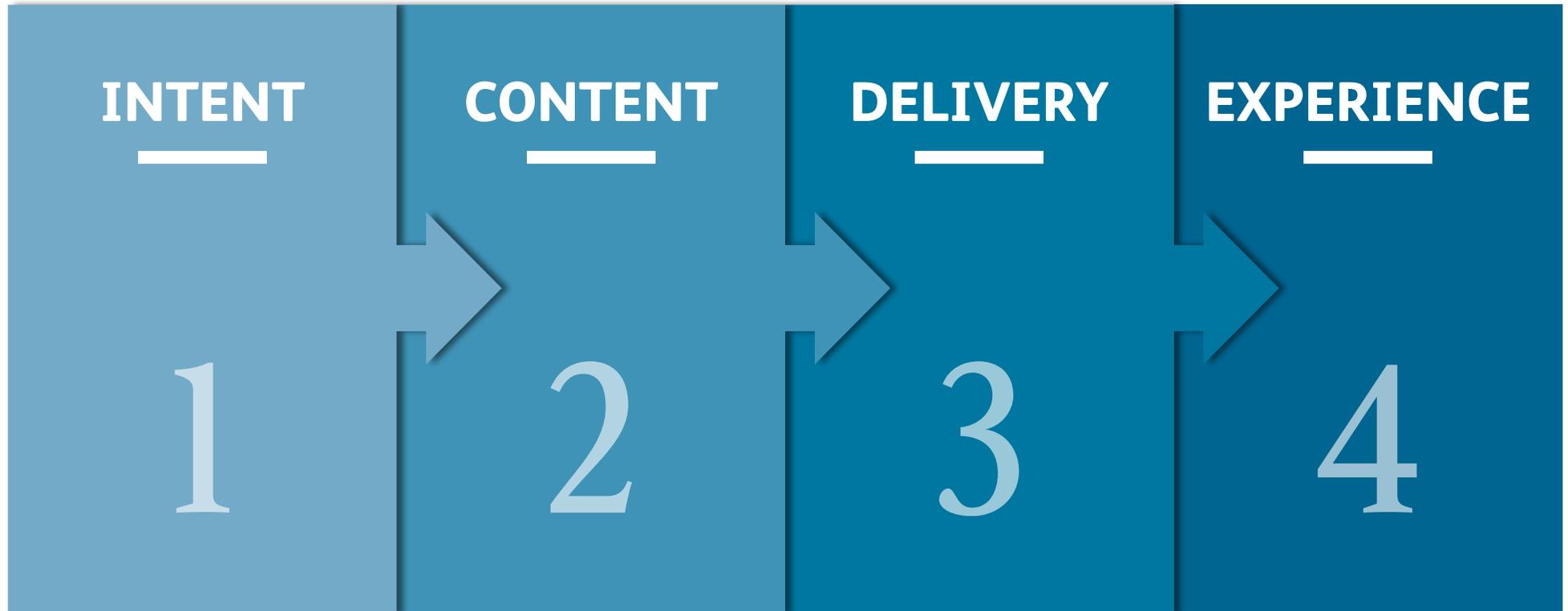
Articulating and evidencing curriculum intent

Building breadth and depth in curriculum

Engaging the whole school community in curriculum discussions

Ensuring that all your students have access to a world-class curriculum

4 PILLARS OF PRINCIPLED CURRICULUM DESIGN



Introduction

SSAT have long advocated a principled approach to curriculum design. Dylan Wiliam's *Principled Curriculum Design*, written as part of SSAT's *Redesigning Schooling* series, is considered by many to be a definitive publication in this area.

We welcome Ofsted's decision to focus on curriculum; we believe that all students deserve access to a broad and balanced curriculum that challenges and inspires them.

How to use this resource

SSAT believes that schools are best placed to formulate a curriculum offer that works for their community. On this basis, this resource does not attempt to tell you what your curriculum should look like, rather it poses the questions that you need to ask and be confident in answering.

We recommend that you work through the questions, initially as a senior team, and then in discussion with your whole staff, your students, governors and all stakeholders.

Highlight any areas that you need to look at in more detail and use these as the basis for the ongoing review of your curriculum.

As you build a better picture of your current position, consider the pros and cons of your approach. For example, if decisions about content are driven by what you feel students will find most interesting, are you confident that you are providing sufficient stretch and challenge?

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

SSAT are running a series of one day events around curriculum intent in the autumn term. Find out more information and book your place at these events in [London](#), [Leeds](#) and [Birmingham](#).

1. INTENT

What is your curriculum intent/vision? What principles underpin your approach to curriculum?

- Growth mindset?
- Belief in a traditional academic curriculum?
- Achievement for all?
- Preparation for work?
- Developing cultural capital?
- Social justice?

What is distinctive about your offer?

- All students learn a language?
Mandarin?
- Creative curriculum in KS3?
- Global perspectives?
- High degree of challenge?
- Focus on cultural capital?

Who informs your vision?

- Headteacher?
- Senior leaders?
- All staff?
- Students?
- Parents?
- Governors?
- National policy makers?

How do you shape your vision?

- What processes do you have for engaging stakeholders?
- How do they feed into the ongoing review of your curriculum intent?

Who owns your vision?

- Who knows what your curriculum intent is?
- Could they describe it in one sentence?
- Do all stakeholders buy into your vision?

What does a broad and balanced curriculum look like in your context?

- Curriculum content?
- Subject choices?
- Wider learning?

2. CONTENT

Who makes the decisions about content/specifications?

- Heads of department?
- Teachers?
- Students?
- Senior leaders?
- Parents?
- Governors?

On what basis are decisions made?

- What is most interesting for students?
- What will challenge students?
- What students will find easiest?
- Teacher subject knowledge?
- Teacher preference?
- Whole school curriculum intent?
- Requirements of exam specs at a later key stage?

How is curriculum content quality assured?

- What metrics are used?
- How are curriculum choices measured against your curriculum intent?
- How consistent is quality assurance?
- Whose job is it to approve decisions about curriculum choice?
- What are the risks/benefits of the way that you make decisions about curriculum – eg if you are led by student preference, is there sufficient challenge?

How does curriculum content meet the needs of all learners?

- Is the content sufficiently challenging for all students?
- How do you plan for and monitor the wider curriculum (beyond lessons)?
- Do all students find the content motivating and interesting? How do you know?

What goes before and afterwards?

- How do you build on prior learning in KS2?
- How far is decision-making at KS3 driven by the demands of KS4?

3. DELIVERY

How does your pedagogy support your curriculum intent?

- Do all staff have a shared understanding of the kind of learning that will support your vision?
- How does professional learning support successful delivery of your curriculum?
- Do all students have a clear understanding of where they are and what they need to do to improve?

How far do departments work collaboratively to support curriculum delivery?

- Do departments work together to contextualise learning for students?
- Do teachers know what is being delivered elsewhere and when?

How does your use of curriculum time support your curriculum intent?

- How does the structure of your school day support successful delivery?
- Do you use time creatively to enhance students' experiences?

How far do departments work consistently to support curriculum delivery?

- Are there shared approaches to teaching key skills and techniques – eg literacy and numeracy?

Do teachers have the subject knowledge required to deliver your vision for curriculum?

- Who reviews teachers' subject knowledge?
- How is teachers' subject knowledge supported?

How is delivery of your curriculum quality assured?

- What benchmarks do you use to quality assure your offer?
- Who decides whether curriculum choices and delivery are good enough?
- How is best practice celebrated and shared?
- What happens when it is not good enough?

How does your curriculum accommodate the needs of different students?

- How much flexibility is there for personalisation?
- How far does formative assessment drive adjustments to the curriculum to meet the need of classes and individuals?
- What opportunities do students have to direct their own learning?
- Is the quality of delivery the same for all students?

4. EXPERIENCE

How far is your curriculum intent lived out in students' experiences?

- Who informs your view on this?
- How engaged and motivated are students? How do you know?
- What metrics are used to measure this?

How is the entirety of students' experiences monitored and evaluated?

- How do you look at students' wider development?
- How do you monitor engagement in activities beyond lessons?
- How do you intervene to ensure that all students are accessing the full offer?
- How do you recognise the entirety of students' achievements, within and beyond lessons?

What processes do you have in place for ongoing review of your curriculum offer?

- How often do you revisit your vision for curriculum?
- Whose job is it to assess how far your curriculum intent is being achieved?
- Who feeds into this evaluation?
- What happens when there are concerns?
- How do you ensure that all middle leaders are making decisions that support your curriculum intent?
- How does data analysis and review of assessment practice feed into quality assurance of your curriculum model?

How far are you willing to adapt your curriculum where needed?

- How often do you change what you deliver?
- When changes are made, what drives those changes?
- How have you amended your curriculum over time – eg embedding learning technologies?

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