



Your program has decided to work on its ELA curriculum, and this work may be raising some questions for you. Here is an overview, excerpted and adapted from the ACLS website¹, of what curriculum is and what you'll be building. We also highlight the supports available to you from the SABES ELA C&I PD Center.

What is Curriculum?

(Definition adapted from the [Glossary of Education Reform](#).)

Curriculum refers to the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the learning standards they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course; and the tests, assessments, and other methods used to evaluate student learning.

Curricula often include the following components, among others:

- Guidance for teacher(s) using the curriculum;
- A **scope and sequence** for each level that provides a big picture view of the curriculum and describes the instructional units to be taught;
- A series of **unit plans** that delve into more detail than the big picture overview in the scope and sequence; and
- **Lesson plans**, included in the unit plans and/or developed by teachers in real time.

Scope and Sequence

A scope and sequence provides an overview of the plan for instruction and a format for seeing the "big picture" of a detailed curriculum. As an overview, a scope and sequence is often divided into manageable chunks of instruction, or units, and describes how these units work together to provide students the college and career readiness skills and knowledge they need.

¹ <https://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/frameworks/components.html>

A scope and sequence:

- Gives users an idea of the learning that should occur over the period of time covered,
- Shows the scope of the material to be learned and practiced and in what sequence, and
- Indicates how unit topics, skills, content knowledge, and culminating tasks build over time.

A scope and sequence can give information to teachers in two ways:

1. First, an overall, program-wide scope and sequence can be used as a guide for all classes in ABE or ESOL instruction, and makes clear the transitions from one class level to the next, as in the graphic below:

Scope and Sequence for XYZ Program offering ABE Instruction for all levels

Beginning ABE Level (GLE 0–3)					Intermediate ABE Level (GLE 4–8)					ASE Level (GLE 9–12)				
Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5

This format provides the director, teachers, and other stakeholders an overview of the year so that the full scope of services may be understood. Educators teaching different levels may discuss the degree of alignment between what is taught at one level and higher or lower levels, so that instruction is seamless for students.

2. Second, a scope and sequence can zero in on one particular class/instructional level to describe the instructional units, as in the graphic below:

Scope and Sequence for XYZ Program's Intermediate ABE Classes

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5

This second use of a scope and sequence provides an overview of the year to educators teaching at a specific level—in this case, the Intermediate ABE level—so that the unit topics, skills developed, and culminating work may be seen as a whole as they build on each other month by month.

This "treetops" view is critical for teachers (and directors) to have as they plan for instruction:

- Teachers can see what skill development needs to come first in order to progress to the next unit; and
- Teachers can stay aware of the amount of learning that is expected to happen in the year.

Unit Plans

Compared to the "year at a glance" function of the scope and sequence, unit plans go into greater depth to guide the teacher in the specific skills and content knowledge to be developed.

In the unit plan, teachers turn level-specific [CCRS&E](#) standards into unit objectives, show more clearly how those objectives will be evaluated through the summative/culminating assessment(s), and offer guidance on how to sequence lessons within the unit. Teachers also flesh out the vocabulary to be learned, provide tips for EBRI and English Learners, and suggest other ways to differentiate instruction. A comprehensive list of diverse student and teacher materials and resources are provided as well.

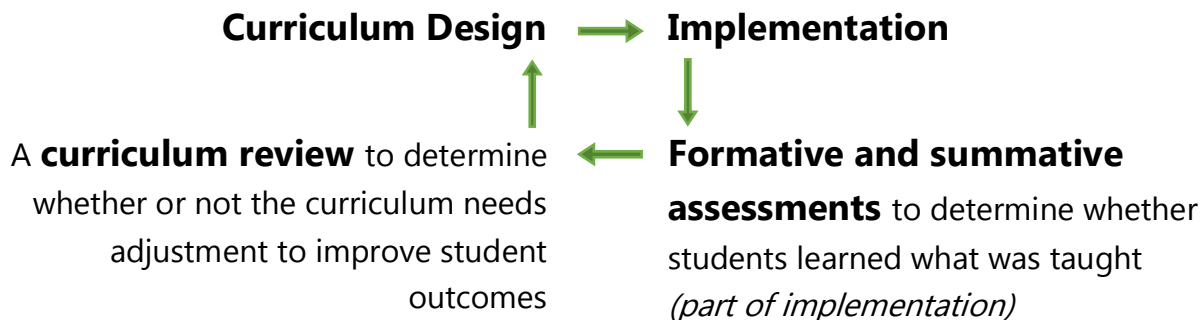
Unit plans are a valuable teacher resource. Having a completed unit plan reduces planning time for lessons, ensures that all lessons are contributing to student outcomes, and ensures that all the lesson activities and tasks fit together into a cohesive whole.

Lesson Plans

When developing lessons, teachers pull everything together that has been thought through in the unit plan for meeting the varied instructional needs of their students. Teachers reference the unit plan often when writing their lesson plans, and benefit from the thinking that already went into what and how students will learn. Sample lesson plans can provide further guidance for teachers as they develop lessons for their own students.

Curriculum Development

The curriculum development process consists of four tasks:



Curriculum design is rarely a linear process. Some programs start with the scope and sequence, getting a sense of how all the big pieces work together before drilling down into the development of individual unit plans. Other programs start by drafting key pieces of units typically taught by teachers at a particular level, inserting them into a scope and sequence template, and filling in with additional units. Wherever programs start, they are likely to move back and forth between the scope and sequence and the unit plans to ensure alignment, a variety of rich and authentic performance tasks, and a logical progression of the development of skills and knowledge over time.

Grant Wiggins' and Jay McTighe's book, *Understanding by Design*, is an essential resource for programs designing curriculum. The book describes the foundation for building curriculum around content standards, clear unit outcomes, and culminating assessments. Another excellent resource is the small but pithy book by the same authors: *Solving 25 Problems in Unit Design*.

SABES Support for ELA Curriculum Development

The SABES English Language Arts Curriculum & Instruction Professional Development Center offers extensive professional development for developing curriculum materials and implementing the CCRSAE. Programs can also find a wealth of templates and resources at <https://sabes.org/content/creating-curricula-ela-overview>.

Programs may ask the SABES ELA C&I PD Center for feedback on their curriculum materials. Programs are advised to send advance notice of their intent to submit materials and to specify the types of materials they will be submitting, to facilitate planning and timely feedback. For contact information, see the center's website (<https://sabes.org/pd-center/ela>).