Going Digital:
A CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT PLAYBOOK

Today’s education leaders know that going digital is a reality. According to the Consortium for School Networking’s 2015 IT Leadership Survey, 84% of school technology officials expect that at least half of their instructional materials will be digitally based within three years. These changes bring some challenges, but also huge advantages...for curriculum directors, teachers, students and parents.

In order to fully succeed with a digital curriculum, you have to be prepared. This playbook will help you take advantage of a modern, personalized and dynamic digital curriculum.
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The goals of good curriculum management

Using a dynamic curriculum management solution will ensure district-wide standards and promote personalized teaching and learning.

For any school district, consistency in teaching is essential, as it allows you to assess the performance of students and teachers against common standards. With this knowledge, you can quickly identify individuals, groups or subject areas that need special attention, and uncover best practices from throughout the district. One key to making this happen is high-quality curriculum management.

Curriculum management is the selection and provision of teaching plans and materials for teachers. In many school districts, this is done digitally through disparate systems that work alongside other digital tools, such as intranets, Learning Management Systems (LMSs) and document sharing tools. As a result, the curriculum management system is not fully integrated into a school’s teaching workflow, and so fails to deliver the inherent benefits that an integrated curriculum management system can provide.

The itslearning LMS includes in-built curriculum management capabilities that enable you to connect courses, resources and assessments with common standards and learning objects. This ensures all teaching objects across your district are aligned, and so enables you to accurately measure and compare student progress and performance. In addition, an integrated itslearning curriculum management solution enables you to provide and organize a wide variety of digital teaching materials. As a result, your teachers can personalize their teaching by selecting resources that cater to their students’ differing needs. And, because itslearning integrates or replaces many of your other IT systems, it gives your teachers and parents one interface and login for all their essential school data and information.

In this playbook, you will:

• Discover four proven curriculum management models that districts have used to integrate curriculum management into the itslearning LMS
• Read in-depth case studies that show how districts are streamlining and aligning their curriculum management processes to ensure equitable and dynamic access to resources
• Find out what to consider when selecting a modern LMS
• Get a checklist to ensure your team is ready to embark on a successful digital curriculum journey

About itslearning
itslearning’s mission is to help teachers and learners support, improve and transform their learning and teaching processes. Our LMS is used by thousands of schools around the globe to improve teaching and learning, and manage information, data and resources more effectively.
# Why use a digital curriculum management system

If well implemented, digital curriculum management can solve many common problems facing school districts today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your challenge</th>
<th>Our solution</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>We can’t track and compare student progress accurately</strong></td>
<td><strong>Align units, lessons and assessments</strong></td>
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<td>It is difficult to consistently measure the performance of students, classes</td>
<td>We help you create a curriculum management solution that not only gives</td>
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<td>or schools against each other, which makes it hard to identify problem areas;</td>
<td>teachers access to standards, but also connects all units, lessons and</td>
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<td>and difficult to advance student progress</td>
<td>assessments to district, state or national standards, as well as</td>
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<td>established learning outcomes and your own learning objectives.</td>
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<td><strong>We already have too many systems</strong></td>
<td><strong>A one-stop solution</strong></td>
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<td>For many teachers, the vast array of different systems, all with different</td>
<td>itslearning helps you save time and drive efficiency by creating a solution</td>
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<td>logins and purposes, can be off-putting, which often results in lower usage</td>
<td>that gives teachers, curriculum managers and parents quick and easy access to</td>
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<td>courses, resources and student progress – all from one user interface, with</td>
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<td>single-sign-on to different systems.</td>
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<td><strong>Curriculum changes are hard to implement</strong></td>
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<td>As a dynamic curriculum management system, itslearning ensures all changes</td>
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<td>as standards change or new materials become available; but reflecting these</td>
<td>are automatically reflected throughout your district, in every school and for</td>
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<td>changes across the district is time and resource heavy</td>
<td>every teacher.</td>
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<td><strong>It is hard to facilitate best practice</strong></td>
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<td>There are many good teaching practices in the district, but finding and</td>
<td>With itslearning, you can encourage best practice by building it into your</td>
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<td>sharing these is difficult</td>
<td>course design and pedagogy. You can also establish online spaces for resource</td>
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<td>sharing and teacher collaboration.</td>
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<td><strong>Investment barriers are too high</strong></td>
<td><strong>Maximize your curriculum investment</strong></td>
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<td>If a district already has invested in resources, investing additional time</td>
<td>itslearning enables you to maximize your investment in existing resources</td>
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<td>and money in curriculum management can be difficult</td>
<td>by helping make all your resources easily accessible to teachers, including</td>
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<td>free content.</td>
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Four successful strategies for curriculum management

Every district has its own vision, goals, philosophies and timelines. As a result, there is no single ‘best’ curriculum management model. Here are four strategies that districts have used successfully.

When it comes to curriculum management, there is no right or wrong answer – as the best solution depends on where you are and what you want to achieve. However, certain strategies have proven to work better than others. The four strategies here show how different districts approached curriculum management with the help of itslearning to create a unique curriculum management solution tailored specifically for their district's vision, goals, philosophy and infrastructure.

In all four examples, we worked closely with the district – from the initial strategic discussion through development, implementation and data import – to ensure the curriculum management solution was fully embedded in their district-wide itslearning LMS configuration.
SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

1. Mass migration Houston ISD, Texas

The strategy: Mass migration is a systematic approach to curriculum management. Courses and course plans are created centrally to ensure they match the curriculum and standards. Teachers are then given access to additional materials (also linked to the curriculum) that they can use to supplement and personalize their teaching.

The example: Houston Independent School District (ISD) developed over 200 course templates for teachers in itslearning. Each course houses district-level curriculum documents, a unit structure populated with resources, and a basic standards-aligned course plan. In addition, Houston ISD worked with itslearning to load publisher content into the itslearning content library, including free content. All content is linked to standards and learning goals, and teachers in the district can now access over one million learning resources to guide, support and supplement their teaching.

“With the assistance of the itslearning implementation team, we now have aggregated over 1 million learning objects from various publishers in our district’s library. itslearning is now the central repository for content and resources used by teachers and students and allows parents to share information and collaborate in the education process.”

Beatriz Arnillas
Director of Education Technology, Houston Independent School District, TX

2. Jump started and crowd sourced Forsyth County, Georgia

The strategy: The jump-started approach gives teachers a great deal of freedom in how they teach the curriculum. Teachers have access to resources that have been linked to the curriculum and learning goals, and they use these to structure their courses. The key to success is to provide a wide variety of teaching materials as well as targeted training and support for teachers.

The example: Forsyth County harvested and created a wide variety of secondary math and ELA resources, which are available to teachers through the itslearning content library. Teachers can also create spaces within itslearning where they can collaborate with each other. To ensure the materials are used correctly, Forsyth County has a district-wide Professional Development Plan that gives all teachers training in how to use the resources and content library. In addition, each school has an instructional technology specialist to provide technical support.

“itslearning is an important instructional delivery and collaboration tool across all levels of our district, and our partnership assures us that we have implemented the most robust learning management system available for educators and students alike.”

Mike Evans
Director of Information and Instructional Support Systems, Forsyth County Schools, GA
3 Focused best practice
Harford County, Maryland

**The strategy:** In this approach, the district created course templates for its teachers based on best practice. The templates include a standards-aligned course planner, as well as all necessary teaching resources.

**The example:** The district created best practice courses by putting together curriculum-writing teams for each subject. The teams built a single best practice course template in itslearning that is now used by all subject teachers. The course template includes a standards-aligned planner organized into units and lessons, as well as a wide variety of linked materials, including digital resources and student-centric activities.

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4 Universal Design for Learning
Bartholomew CSC, Indiana

**The strategy:** Universal Design for Learning is an educational framework based on developing flexible learning environments that can accommodate individual learning differences. To achieve this, teachers are given access to a variety of teaching resources designed to give students multiple ways to acquire information and demonstrate their learning.

**The example:** Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation has grounded all of its district work in Universal Design for Learning. This includes redesigning all district-level courses with this framework in mind. The resources are developed centrally and made available to teachers through the itslearning content library.

Martha Barwick
Coordinator of Instructional Technology, Harford County Public Schools, MD

“I love its versatility. It can suit the needs of our very diverse corporation. We have more ways to individualize learning, we can offer eLearning days, and it is a valuable tool to implement UDL practice.”

Nick Williams
Coordinator of Instructional Technology, Bartholomew Consolidated Schools, IN

“At the end of the day, we need our teachers using tools that provide them with the best opportunity to APPLY best practice in their classrooms - itslearning helps us do just that.”
**Harford County Schools, MD**

**Background**
Harford County Public Schools partnered with itslearning as a way to blend traditional instructional practices with today’s digital resources to enhance instruction through the use of a digital platform.

**Initial needs for Curriculum Management**
Transform static curriculum materials into engaging digital content for students in Harford County Schools focusing in the areas of 8th grade social studies, 10th grade English, high school science (Geohazards) and 3rd grade Library Media for the initial pilot courses.

**Scope of Work and Process**

**Curriculum migration and transformation**

**Initial Scope of Work**
- Creation, migration and transformation of curriculum materials for four courses
- Creation of custom planner fields as determined by Harford.
- Inclusion of planner fields based on the decision of the district
- Uploading and creation of course materials.
- Selection of the correct standards for each course at the course level.

**Process**
- The work was done mainly by teachers selected as Curriculum Writers from Harford with hands-on assistance by the HCPS Instructional Technology Team and itslearning consultants.
- District determined planner fields with assistance from itslearning
- Harford was solely responsible for accessing materials and any creation of new materials
- Harford content supervisors and curriculum writers created the courses to roll out for staff and student use

**Success and References**
12 big challenges your LMS Can Solve
http://www.eschoolnews.com/2014/12/22/education-lms-590/?

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**Do’s and Don’ts for Moving towards a Digital Curriculum**

**Advice from Martha Barwick**

1. **Do:** Define your district’s approach to digital or blended learning and provide comprehensive professional development on the characteristics of digital or blended learning in a specific content area prior to developing digital curriculum.

2. **Do:** Develop or purchase a comprehensive, standards-based repository of learning objects.

3. **Do:** Develop, within professional development, the proficiency of curriculum writers in evaluating current resources to determine the relevance in a digital curriculum and apply digital tools to transition current resources from a paper/pencil activity when appropriate.

4. **Do:** Integrate web-based tools and Office 365 (or a similar application) to extend the affordances of itslearning.

5. **Don’t:** Focus on the technology. Always stay focused on the learning objective.
Houston Independent School District, Texas

Background
Houston ISD’s district-wide initiative, PowerUp, is aimed at transforming teaching and learning. PowerUp is about “powering up” all 283 of Houston ISD’s schools to create a personalized learning environment for today’s 21st century learners and to enable teachers to more effectively facilitate instruction, manage curriculum, collaborate with their peers, and engage today’s digitally-wired students. Houston ISD selected itslearning as its PowerUp “HUB”, or digital learning platform, in January 2014 after an extensive selection process. After the selection process, a cross-functional team from Houston ISD initiated planning for the implementation phase, in collaboration with itslearning. Key Houston ISD Project Management Office (PMO) and itslearning project management techniques and governance processes were aligned to deliver the project’s scope and processes to support curriculum requirements.

Initial requirements for curriculum management
1. Migrate all curriculum materials to one place for course templates and curriculum guides
2. Aggregate publisher content into one single library

Phase 1: Curriculum migration

Initial scope of work
- Migration of existing curriculum materials for standard courses into 220 course templates (or curriculum guides).
- Creation of custom planner fields (unit and lesson) as determined by Houston ISD.
- Inclusion of planner fields based on the documents provided at unit level only, from the provided Scope and Sequence document.
- Uploading of all Word documents and PDF documents into the appropriate folder for each course and sharing of these items into the library so that the Houston ISD curriculum department could update as needed.
- Selection of the correct state standards, TEKS in this case, for each course at course level.

Process
- The work was collaborative between Houston ISD and itslearning.
- Together, we determined the planner fields for all courses.
- We created an online dropbox for curriculum documents for each course.
- Houston ISD staff prepared the documents and placed them into each course’s folder in the dropbox.
- itslearning staff created the contents of the planner based on the Scope and Sequence document provided for each course, and uploaded the other documents into the course folders as provided. Each item was shared in the library so that any course made from this template could include these curriculum materials and so that the curriculum owner can easily update and distribute these materials as needed.
Further developments by Houston ISD

Since the initial Word and PDF curriculum documents were loaded in the spring of 2014, Houston ISD developed in itslearning for the 2015-2016 school year a full set of digital master courses for key secondary core courses (English 1, English 2, Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, Grade 8 Social Studies, US History, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Grade 6-9 Secondary Reading and Writing courses). Each master course includes a complete interactive student-facing course, backed up with teacher support information. In addition, five student courses for state end-of-course test remediation have been in place for two years.

Phase 2: Publisher content integration in the library

Initial scope of work

- Facilitate the inclusion of publisher content in the library from a pre-determined list of publisher titles.
- Publisher content to be provided in IMS Global Thin Common Cartridge (TCC) format.

Process for adding publisher content

1. Houston ISD initiates contact with the content provider, and introduces the publisher to itslearning and IMS Global. The vendor is asked to join IMS Global as a member.

2. Itslearning provides the content provider with a TCC template. (The business requirements document used to build the TCC includes the keyword requirements from Houston ISD.)

3. The vendor builds TCC. After getting TCC conformance-certified by IMS Global, the vendor runs TCC through IMS Global’s testing site.

4. Itslearning loads the TCC into the partner test site.

5. The content provider and itslearning perform QA testing in the partner test site.

6. Itslearning loads the TCC into Houston ISD’s itslearning test site.

7. Houston ISD performs UAT with the assistance of the content provider and itslearning.

8. Houston ISD signs off.

9. Itslearning loads the TCC in Houston ISD’s itslearning production site.

Success and references

Awards won:

- 2014 Learning Counsel: Award of Excellence for Digital Curriculum & Content Strategy: 1st Place Urban Schools
- 2015 IMS Global Learning Impact, Silver Medal

By the numbers (as of January 2016)

- >250,000 users in the platform
- >1,000,000 content items in the library
- 120: Number of publisher cartridges loaded
- >250 Number of template courses developed

References:

- http://www.houstonisd.org/hubinfo
- Hub overview video: https://vimeo.com/121933666
- Master courses in Houton ISD video: https://vimeo.com/142684263
Selecting an LMS | Essential Questions to Ask

There are many things to consider when choosing a next generation LMS. Here are the most important questions to ask when assessing the system’s curriculum management components.

1. Does it give you a one-stop-shop for your most commonly used IT systems, including curriculum management?

   The easier a system is to use, the more people will use it. Storing all information in one place, and giving teachers and students one interface, vastly increases your chance of success. Eliminating the need for separate logins and passwords for publisher content will help you get curriculum resources to everyone with a single click.

2. Does it have a customizable planner to help you align the curriculum to student learning objectives and/or district, state or national standards?

   Connecting the curriculum to learning objectives and standards makes it much simpler for teachers to find and use resources, and enables you to effectively measure class and individual progress.

3. Does it allow you to share lessons, resources, assessments and learning goals across the district?

   For consistent curriculum management, you need to ensure every teacher in every school has access to what they need.

4. Can you build a library of standards-aligned, searchable resources?

   Standards-aligned resources, searchable by keyword, level or learning goal, make it much easier for teachers to find resources appropriate for their students. This not only improves their ability to implement personalized learning, but also saves them valuable time.
Does it support multiple teaching strategies and personalized learning?
For personalized learning to succeed, you need to give your teachers a wide variety of resources to choose from. A good curriculum management system should enable you to integrate a wide variety of resources, including Web 2.0 resources such as Prezi, TeacherTube, YouTube and more.

Does it enable you to track and advance student progress?
A good curriculum management system should not only measure progress, but should create reports and data that you can use to assess performance. It should also enable you to use subjective feedback models, such as student blogs, discussion boards, surveys and polls.

Does it facilitate best practice through modeling and collaboration?
Every teacher has something to offer: a unique perspective, an engaging resource or many years of experience. A good curriculum management system will enable you to tap into this knowledge and share it with others through in-built modeling tools, such as course templates, and collaborative online Professional Development spaces.

Does it offer content auto-update?
Even the best curriculum may have to be tweaked and adjusted throughout the year, so you need a dynamic solution that ensures these changes are reflected throughout the system immediately, with a minimum of effort.
The itslearning curriculum management solution

Going beyond the traditional LMS with dynamic curriculum management.

itslearning is a K-12 LMS that enables you to better facilitate instructional delivery and engage today’s students. From developing course and lesson plans to distributing assignments, marking tests and sharing reports and information, you can do it all with itslearning. A district-wide solution that’s available anytime, anywhere, and on any device, itslearning combines many of your digital needs in one fully functional interface.

Everything you need for digital curriculum management and more

itslearning fully integrates curriculum management with your resources and other IT systems. This enables you to save time and drive efficiency by giving teachers, curriculum managers and parents quick and easy access to courses, resources, student progress reports and more.

• **One-stop shop:** Curriculum guides, instructional frameworks and instructional resources are all located in the same platform – all with one login.

• **Content auto-update:** When library content is updated, all courses using that content are also auto-updated.

• **Storage and search:** The library provides a central location to store content created by teachers, schools, districts or publishers – all searchable by keyword and curriculum standards.

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*Michele Eaton,*
Virtual Learning Specialist for Wayne Township, Indiana, US

“itslearning is quickly becoming our ‘learning hub’. We are able to seamlessly combine our curriculum mapping processes with the student-learning environment. This new functionality will make it easier for teachers to plan, access district resources and enable a student-centered learning environment for all stakeholders.”

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Track and advance student progress

With itslearning, you can align all units, lessons and assessments to district, state or national standards, as well as your own learning goals and objectives. In addition, everything is structured around the teaching workflow, giving your teachers flexible tools for delivering feedback.

• **Standards-aligned planning:** The planner allows course developers to build the scope and sequence of courses, incorporating standards-aligned content from the library.

• **Standards-aligned assessments:** Assessments are pre-aligned to standards selected for a specific lesson.

• **Planner sharing:** Share and copy lessons from one course to another.

• **Reporting:** Standards-aligned reports are automatically generated and delivered to stakeholders.
Facilitate best practices
As well as helping you identify best practice, itslearning enables you to build best practice into course design and encourage teaching collaboration.

- **Course templates**: Create courses from templates that include a customized planner, resources, assessments, documents, standards and course settings.
- **Easy course updates**: Push out updates from the template course to existing courses.
- **Resource sharing**: Share resources with teachers, schools, other districts or the global teaching community.
- **Support for multiple teaching strategies**: Flexible tools support a variety of strategies, including Universal Design for Learning, assessment for learning, backward design, personalized learning and student-focused learning.

Maximize your curriculum investment
With the use of itslearning, you can extend your investment in existing curriculum resources by streamlining resource management and providing more meaningful access to instructional material across the district.

- **Content consolidation**: Include publisher or free (OER) content in the library.
- **Content/data migration services**: itslearning helps import your data and assists in the creation of courses pre-populated with content.

Much, much more
There is much more to itslearning. Visit [www.itslearning.net](http://www.itslearning.net) to find out more.

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Key itslearning features for excellent curriculum management

The itslearning library
A digital ‘library’ that contains all digital teaching resources, assessments, lesson plans and other learning objects. Anyone with permission can add resources to the library. Resources can be tagged with any relevant information – such as subject, grade-level and learning objective – to make them easy for teachers to find in a search.
Getting started with curriculum management

Here are some questions and tips to help you and your team get started with digital curriculum management with itslearning.

Does your team understand the possibilities and advantages of:

1. The library: Internal and external content (publisher and OER)?
2. The planner and how the standards alignment works?
3. The use of templates versus resource courses?

Would you like to include publisher content?
If so...

1. Take an inventory of the publishers and titles.
2. See if the content is available in Thin Common Cartridge® format.
3. Is there a fee for this format from the publisher?
4. Is there new content about to be purchased? If so...
5. Ask about inclusion of Thin Common Cartridge® format as part of the purchase.
6. Send a letter to all publishers about new requirements, and ensure this is included in all bid specifications. (itslearning can provide a sample letter.)

Do you want to create templates?

1. Which courses will need templates?
2. Which fields will you want for the course planner in the templates?
3. Which standard settings do you want for the course templates?
4. Will you want to standardize the design of the course dashboard in itslearning?
5. Who will organize content and activities in the planner?
6. Who will contribute materials?
7. Who will update templates?

Want to use the library?

1. Who will be in charge of the publisher content workflow?
2. Will there be a vetting process for teacher created content?
3. Who will be able to add content and at what level?
4. What are the tagging requirements?
5. Will there be special generic users for creating and updating curriculum content (secondary math users, for example)?
Prep to get started

Want to use assessments?
1. Who will create assessments (tests)?
2. Will questions be tagged to standards?
3. Will someone create standards-aligned rubrics?

How and where is your curriculum organized now?
1. Scope and sequence or instructional frameworks documents: What format are they in now? Do you want to use these to design the structure for the course planners?
2. Standards or learning objectives: Do you want to just use state or national standards or are there additional standards you want added to the learning objectives repository? Have you considered professional learning standards for Professional Development courses?
3. Other curriculum documents: Curriculum maps, vertical alignment matrixes, unit guides: Would you like these included as part of course templates for teachers?
4. Rubrics: Do you want to build standards-based rubrics into the platform so that teachers can easily use them for assignments?
5. Assessments: Do you want to build tests or assignments into the system?
6. Question banks: Do you have question banks you’d like to import? What format are they in? QTI? Examview? Other?
7. Migration assistance: What is your migration plan for the items above? Do you want to migrate them yourself or contract itslearning to do this work?

How will teachers contribute and collaborate?
1. Will they share in the library? Will you have any tagging conventions or rules?
2. How will you get input for master course template development?
3. Do you want teachers to collaborate in designing materials in resource or sandbox courses?
4. Do you want to create Professional Learning Communities?

What is your timeline for this project?
1. Who will be doing what?
2. Who will be the overall project manager?

Plan, align and manage instructional resources from publishers, open educational resources and your own staff in one central library. Save time and promote best practices by sharing course templates and planners across the district.
GLOSSARY

Planner:
The method for organizing units, lessons, resources and activities in a course and aligning them to standards. Fields can be customized.

Template:
A master course from which another course’s content, planner and settings can be copied.

Course Dashboard: The main landing page for a course. This typically would include blocks of content such as the Planner and Task lists.

Sandbox/Resource Course: A course typically with no students where teachers can collaborate in developing materials and lessons.

Thin Common Cartridge® (TCC): A standard by IMS Global for sharing content.

LOR: Learning Objects Repository or “Library”.

Library: itslearning’s name for its Learning Objects Repository (LOR).

FURTHER READING

Best Practices for Curriculum Management Webinar
http://www.itslearning.net/panel-discussion-best-practices-for-curriculum-management

http://www.itslearning.net/panel-discussion-best-practices-for-curriculum-management

http://www.itslearning.net/panel-discussion-best-practices-for-curriculum-management

IMS Global: Interoperability Standards Helping to Transform the Digital Curriculum
http://www.imsglobal.org/sites/default/files/articles/sli17-051815.pdf

http://www2.kqed.org/mindshift/2014/03/12/how-to-teach-the-standards-without-becoming-standardized/

EdWeek: Big Districts Pressure Publishers on Digital Content Delivery
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/12/03/13techstandards.h34.html

itslearning ebook (USA): 7 Steps to take before you make the switch:
http://info.itslearning.net/rs/655-PLS-373/images/7_steps_to_take.pdf

Tearing Down the Walls between Software Silos
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/10/01/06lms-integration.h34.html

How to Teach the Standards Without Becoming Standardized
http://www2.kqed.org/mindshift/2014/03/12/how-to-teach-the-standards-without-becoming-standardized/
Curriculum management with itslearning

Whatever model you choose for curriculum management, you need a curriculum management system that aligns all teaching resources with standards and learning goals, and integrates everything into your teaching workflow.

itslearning is a next-generation learning platform that goes beyond the traditional learning management system (LMS) by allowing educators to easily plan and manage their curriculum. An interactive and flexible digital learning planner coupled with a searchable learning objective repository is designed to help you reach your curriculum management goals. With itslearning you can, easily:

- Streamline the Curriculum Management Process
- Track and Advance Student Progress
- Facilitate Best Practices
- Maximize Your Curriculum Investment

itslearning is your one-stop shop to organize and manage functions for creating and delivering courses, assessments, standards management, grades and more. With itslearning, everyone in your school system can work efficiently, collaborate and communicate – all in one, simple interface that works well on a variety of devices – from Chromebooks to tablets, and smartphones to laptops.