

# Curriculum Overwhelm Assessment

A diagnostic tool to identify where your curriculum feels disconnected and overwhelming.

By Allison Zmuda

Curriculum Design Consultant

 [allisonzmuda.com](http://allisonzmuda.com)

 [allison@allisonzmuda.com](mailto:allison@allisonzmuda.com)

 [@Allison Zmuda](https://www.linkedin.com/company/allisonzmuda)



## INSTRUCTIONS

Rate each statement on a scale of 1–5:

1 = Never true

2 = Rarely true

3 = Sometimes true

4 = Often true

5 = Always true

This assessment takes 5–7 minutes to complete and will help you identify specific areas where curriculum overwhelm is impacting your school or district.



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[allison@allisonzmuda.com](mailto:allison@allisonzmuda.com)

## SECTION A

### Curriculum Clarity & Organization

**A1.** Our curriculum documents are so dense that teachers struggle to find what they actually need to implement.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**A2.** Teachers frequently ask, "What am I supposed to teach next?" despite having curriculum materials.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**A3.** Our curriculum feels like a collection of disconnected activities rather than a coherent learning journey.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**A4.** Standards and learning objectives are written in language that's difficult for teachers to translate into classroom practice.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**A5.** Teachers spend excessive time trying to figure out how different curriculum resources connect to each other.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**Section A Total: \_\_/25**



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## SECTION B

### Student Engagement & Relevance

**B1.** Students frequently ask "Why do we need to learn this?" and teachers struggle to provide compelling answers.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**B2.** Our curriculum feels disconnected from students' interests, experiences, and the real world.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**B3.** Students appear disengaged or confused about the purpose of their learning activities.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**B4.** Teachers find it challenging to help students see connections between different subjects or units.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**B5.** Assessment results suggest students are completing tasks but not developing deep understanding.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**Section B Total: \_\_/25**



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[allison@allisonzmuda.com](mailto:allison@allisonzmuda.com)

## SECTION C

### Implementation & Support

**C1.** Teachers feel overwhelmed by the number of curriculum resources, programs, and initiatives they're expected to use.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**C2.** New teachers struggle to understand our curriculum expectations despite orientation and mentoring.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**C3.** There's inconsistency in how curriculum is implemented across classrooms, even within the same grade level.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**C4.** Teachers frequently modify or abandon curriculum materials because they don't seem to work for their students.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**C5.** Professional development feels disconnected from our actual curriculum implementation challenges.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**Section C Total: \_\_/25**



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## SECTION D

### Communication & Transparency

**D1.** Families have difficulty understanding what their children are learning and why it matters.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**D2.** Students cannot clearly articulate what they're supposed to be learning or why.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**D3.** Different stakeholders (teachers, administrators, families) have different understandings of our curriculum priorities.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**D4.** Our curriculum documents are not accessible or meaningful to anyone beyond curriculum specialists.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**D5.** Communication about learning goals happens primarily through grades rather than ongoing dialogue about progress.

Circle one: 1 2 3 4 5

**Section D Total: \_\_ /25**



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## YOUR ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Add up all four section totals:

Section A: \_\_/25

Section B: \_\_/25

Section C: \_\_/25

Section D: \_\_/25

**TOTAL SCORE: \_\_/100**



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[allison@allisonzmuda.com](mailto:allison@allisonzmuda.com)

## INTERPRETING YOUR RESULTS

### **20–40 Points: Curriculum Clarity**

You're in good shape! Your curriculum is relatively well-organized and accessible. Focus on fine-tuning specific areas where you scored 3 or above.

*Next Step:* Consider how curriculum storyboards could enhance your already-strong foundation.

### **41–60 Points: Curriculum Confusion**

Time for strategic improvements. Your curriculum has solid elements but significant gaps. Strategic improvements in your highest-scoring areas will have the biggest impact.

*Next Step:* Prioritize addressing your section with the highest score.

**61–80 Points: Curriculum at a Crossroads Significant Improvement** opportunities ahead. Your curriculum has the foundation for success but needs strategic restructuring to better support teaching and learning.

*Next Step:* Consider a comprehensive curriculum redesign process that addresses root causes.

### **81–100 Points: Curriculum Transformation Needed**

Ready for meaningful change. Your current situation presents an excellent opportunity to create something much more effective and supportive.

*Next Step:* Begin with focused streamlining measures while planning for comprehensive transformation.



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[allison@allisonzmuda.com](mailto:allison@allisonzmuda.com)



## REFLECTION & NEXT STEPS

### Reflection Questions

*Based on your highest-scoring section:*

*If Section A (Clarity & Organization) scored highest:*

- *Which curriculum documents do teachers actually use versus which ones sit on shelves?*
- *How might we reorganize information to make it more accessible and actionable?*

*If Section B (Student Engagement) scored highest:*

- *When students ask "Why do we need to learn this?", what would we want teachers to be able to say?*
- *How might we better connect our curriculum to students' lives and interests?*

*If Section C (Implementation & Support) scored highest:*

- *What would successful curriculum implementation look like in our context?*
- *How might we better support teachers in understanding and using our curriculum effectively?*

*If Section D (Communication & Transparency) scored highest:*

- *How might we make our curriculum more transparent and accessible to all stakeholders?*
- *What would it look like for students to truly understand and own their learning journey?*



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## What's Next?

Your assessment results reveal specific areas where curriculum overwhelm is impacting your school or district. The good news? These challenges are solvable with the right approach.

Immediate Actions You Can Take:

1. Share these results with your curriculum team to start strategic conversations
2. Focus first on your highest-scoring section for quickest wins
3. Begin documenting what's currently working well to build on your strengths

For Deeper Transformation: Consider how a systematic approach like curriculum storyboards could help you move from overwhelming complexity to streamlined clarity. When the curriculum is visual, accessible, and purpose-driven, it transforms from a burden into a powerful tool for meaningful learning.

Ready to Transform Your Curriculum? Visit [allisonzmuda.com](http://allisonzmuda.com) to explore how curriculum storyboards can help you create coherent, compelling learning experiences that engage students and support teachers.

This assessment was created by Allison Zmuda, curriculum design consultant and co-author of "Streamlining the Curriculum: Using the Storyboard Approach to Frame Compelling Learning Journeys."



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