Core Practice 2
Mapping Knowledge, Skills, and Habits of Character

In the EL Education model, teachers and school leaders collaborate to ensure that schoolwide, standards-aligned curriculum maps act as the foundation for all planning, instruction, and assessment. Curriculum maps describe a vertical sequence of academic and character targets that are to be addressed at each grade level and within each discipline. These targets become increasingly more sophisticated and rigorous as students progress through the grades. Curriculum maps also provide a year-at-a-glance view of what’s being taught and assessed across disciplines. They guard against unnecessary repetition of content across grades and ensure appropriate repetition of knowledge, skills, and Habits of Character as students move up through the grades.

Leaders and teachers map required standards and college readiness skills to document instruction that has already happened and revise annually to plan instruction for the upcoming year. They include learning targets, texts, topics, and tasks in their maps. They articulate the progression of interdisciplinary learning expeditions, case studies, and projects through the school year in a particular grade and spiraling up through the grade levels, as well as the disciplinary content that is taught outside of learning expeditions.

A. Standards Alignment
1. Teachers and leaders prioritize standards that will receive particular emphasis, creating opportunities for depth and repeated practice of key skills and concepts.
2. For curricula designed by the school, teachers and leaders bundle key standards into complementary interdisciplinary sets that serve as a spine for projects, case studies, and learning expeditions.
3. Teachers and leaders chunk curriculum maps by marking period so that teachers are able to reach a certain level of closure on specific standards within a term. This supports alignment between curriculum pacing and standards-based grading.

B. Mapping Learning Targets
1. For learning expeditions, teachers and leaders create one cohesive map that aligns standards-based academic and character learning targets across all involved disciplines. In schools where all or most standards are being taught through learning expeditions, these will be the primary curriculum maps.
2. Teachers and leaders map standards covered outside of learning expeditions (e.g., during daily mathematics class or content-specific courses in secondary schools or when students are not “on expedition”) to show when knowledge, skills, and Habits of Character are taught and how they are assessed.
3. Teachers and leaders sequence learning targets to maximize interdisciplinary connections whenever possible. For example, in language arts, students may have the target, “I can make inferences about character motivations in The Grapes of Wrath.” In social studies, the same students may have the target, “I can explain how weather and agricultural practices contributed to the Dust Bowl.”
4. Teachers and leaders sequence learning targets to support and scaffold tasks and products. For example, students working on a research paper may begin with skill targets focused on identifying accurate and reliable sources, then address note-taking targets, then writing targets, and finally revision targets.
5. Teachers and leaders map character learning targets to reflect the school’s Habits of Character. They create opportunities for students to focus on and demonstrate progress toward behaviors that enable them to be effective learners and ethical people.

C. Mapping Texts, Tasks, and Assessments
1. Teachers and leaders identify anchor texts and other complex texts (both primary and secondary sources) for content topics that leverage literacy standards across the curriculum.
2. Teachers and leaders articulate the major tasks that students will do to make progress toward long-term learning targets, including priority writing standards for each marking period. This helps teachers and leaders monitor the variety and complexity in product format over time. (Performance tasks, such as student writing or other products, that are highly scaffolded and revised multiple times are not sufficient assessments of knowledge or skills but can be strong measures of students’ quality of work and Habits of Character).

3. Teachers and leaders identify formative assessments (e.g., lab notebooks, reading journals), summative assessments (e.g., mathematics unit tests), and on-demand assessments (e.g., on-demand writing) of discrete long-term targets.