

# Academic Standards, Curriculum, and Instructional Coherence

## Why This Matters:

Academic failure in takeover districts is not accidental. West Virginia's standards emphasize abstract skills over concrete knowledge, districts operate without a shared curricular backbone, and teachers build instruction from scratch. This fragmentation guarantees uneven instruction and makes meaningful improvement nearly impossible.

## Policy Recommendations:

### Rewrite Standards for Knowledge Coherence

- Establish an independent workgroup to replace skills-based standards with sequenced, knowledge-rich content
- Ground revisions in cognitive science and subject-matter expertise
- Require legislative approval to prevent bureaucratic drift

### State-Vetted Curriculum Options

- Require the WVDE to maintain a vetted list of standards-aligned curricula
- Require districts to select from approved options or justify alternatives
- End the expectation that teachers design full curricula independently

## Core Problems:

1. Skills-based standards disconnected from how students learn
2. No state-vetted curriculum guidance
3. High teacher workload with low instructional coherence
4. Students routinely miss essential content when transferring schools

### Instructional Support That Works

- Invest in high-quality instructional materials
- Shift professional development toward curriculum implementation, not theory
- Require districts to make instructional scope and sequence publicly accessible so families can see what knowledge is taught, when, and why.

### Academic Turnaround Teams

- Deploy subject-matter and curriculum experts, not just new administrators
- Grant authority to audit curriculum alignment and instructional quality
- Tie the exit from intervention to documented instructional improvement