

PRAISE FOR *RIGOROUS CURRICULUM DESIGN*

“In the second edition of *Rigorous Curriculum Design*, Larry Ainsworth and Kyra Donovan address the core issue of enhancing students’ learning—ensuring that the taught curriculum emphasizes critical content that is embedded in well-structured units and lessons. If K–12 educators were to follow their clearly articulated recommendations, they would most probably see immediate and substantial increases in students’ learning.”

—**Robert J. Marzano**, chief academic officer, Marzano Research

“‘You can’t tell a book by its cover’” is a statement that’s been uttered so often, one suspects it surely must be true. One never hears, however, the corollary assertion that ‘*You can, in fact, tell a book by its table of contents.*’ Yet this follow-up statement is every bit as accurate as the first.

So, when you dig into the table of contents of this exciting second edition by Ainsworth and Donovan, you’ll immediately recognize that these two authors have brought clarity galore to a curricular terrain more often slathered with murk than lucidity. The book offers practical guidance about the underpinnings of curricular units, the design of such units, and how to implement the insightful strategy called *rigorous curricular design*. This is a ‘must-have’ resource.”

—**W. James Popham**, emeritus professor, UCLA

“Is it time to take a fresh look at the effectiveness of your current curriculum? This book reminds educators that while standards will continue to change, we must always focus on collaboratively designing meaningful and coherent standards-based curriculum. In *RCD*, Larry Ainsworth and Kyra Donovan share a manageable process for the work. This includes considering how prioritized standards become a unifying thread for clarifying learning outcomes; designing units of study that frame relevant, engaging, and rigorous learning experiences accessible to every student; and aligning a range of assessments to gauge student progress across the year. The multiyear approach

frames the big picture of curriculum design with specific and sequenced strategies to guide educators in deepening their own learning and professional practice.”

—**Karin Hess**, author, *A Local Assessment Toolkit to Promote Deeper Learning*; president, Educational Research in Action, Underhill, Vermont

“*Rigorous Curriculum Design, Second Edition* is the ultimate guidebook for educators striving to enhance student learning. It provides the framework for teacher creativity, innovation, and collaboration. This is not a cookie-cutter approach but rather a step-by-step process that gives teachers the professional autonomy to positively impact the academic lives of their students.”

—**Bruce A. Hibbard, PhD**, superintendent, Franklin Township Community School Corporation, Franklin Township, Indiana

“Many educational leaders espouse ideas and practices ‘guaranteed’ to change the trajectory of students’ lives without doing the boots-on-the-ground work needed to gain credibility from teachers who are tasked with carrying out that work. Ainsworth and Donovan are not those leaders. In an era when ‘teacher-proof’ curricula are being marketed right and left—that claim magic bullet ‘fixes’ to underachievement in schools—Ainsworth and Donovan double down on the idea that it’s actually the commitment and innovation of our *educators* that will ultimately affect real change in schools. They place both the ownership of the learning and the answers to our curricular frustrations in teachers’ hands. As someone who has personally implemented *Rigorous Curriculum Design* in my district with the support of Ainsworth and Donovan, I can say that there is no initiative that has had more of an impact on our teachers’ collective efficacy and, in turn, our students’ achievement.”

—**Amy Fast**, principal, McMinnville High School, McMinnville, Oregon

“*Rigorous Curriculum Design, Second Edition*, presents a clear process for designing and implementing challenging, standards-based, and barrier-free curriculum units. The *RCD* framework is essential for school districts,

principals, assistant principals, teacher education programs, curriculum designers, and all who are responsible for leading school reform for the twenty-first century.

As teachers proceed through the easy-to-follow steps, they can choose from various menus of research-based strategies provided to meet the needs of all learners, including English Language Learners, students with special needs, and struggling learners.

As a former New York City assistant principal of supervision and instruction, I implemented *Rigorous Curriculum Design* in my English department under the tutelage of Larry Ainsworth. Currently, as a professor of education in a teacher education preservice program, I have trained teacher candidates on how to create curricular units using the RCD framework. At once, both preservice and in-service teachers realize that RCD provides ‘one-stop shopping’ for the planning of all levels of accountability, including a comprehensive system of formative and summative assessments, differentiation options for diverse groups of learners, research-based interventions to close learning gaps, academic vocabulary, lesson progression, project-based learning, and more.

RCD sets the stage for professional learning communities and/or data teams who together create curricular units, complete with pre- and post-common formative assessments (CFAs). The teachers collaboratively analyze the student data from the CFAs and then choose from the broad array of interventions and strategies that have proactively been built into their RCD units to address learning gaps. This second edition provides even more support, including a useful array of graphic organizers to use in planning sessions.

There is a gap across our nation regarding curriculum unit design. *RCD* is not just a template for teachers to fill in. Rather, it provides the foundation for productive teacher collaboration and school reform.”

—**Karen Andronico, EdD**, former New York City assistant principal;
assistant professor of education, The College of New Rochelle;
adjunct assistant professor of education, Graduate School,
Fordham University; adjunct assistant professor of education,
Fellows Program, Lehman College, CUNY