Rigorous Curriculum Design Glossary: A Lexicon of Terms

**Academic content and performance standards:** General and specific descriptions of knowledge and skills that students need to acquire in a given content area.

**"Aligned" pre-assessment:** Contains the same concepts and skills as the end-of-unit post-assessment, but has fewer questions.

**Big Ideas:** The three or four foundational understandings—main ideas, conclusions, or generalizations relative to the unit's "unwrapped" concepts—that educators want their students to discover and state in their own words by the end of the unit of study. Written as complete sentences, not phrases, Big Ideas convey to students the benefit or value of learning the standards in focus that they are to remember long after instruction ends.

**Common formative assessment (CFA):** An "in-process" assessment based on the "unwrapped" Priority Standards for a unit of study that grade-alike and course-alike educators collaboratively create and administer to all of their students at approximately the same time. When aligned to summative assessments of learning (whether school-based, district- or school-division-based, or state- or province-based) they provide educators with predictive value of how students are likely to perform on those summative assessment measures in time for them to "change up" instruction as needed.

**Common summative assessment (CSA):** A culminating or final assessment that is typically graded and recorded. Even though summative, the results can be used formatively to diagnose individual student learning needs and to inform instruction accordingly, either the next day or in the next unit of study.

**Compacting:** Streamlining or modifying basic content to provide students with tiered assignments (see "Tiered assignments").

**Curriculum:** The high-quality delivery system for ensuring that all students achieve the desired end—the attainment of their designated grade- or course-specific standards.