The Issue: A comprehensive curriculum is needed to provide young children with literacy learning environments that meet high standards (Memo 14). Many educators need guidance, however, when trying to select or assemble a curriculum that advances teaching and learning.

What Are Some Common Pitfalls That Impede Impact?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Pitfalls</th>
<th>What We’re Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Selecting a curriculum that targets the various components of literacy (e.g., phonics, vocabulary), but only in isolation.</td>
<td>1. Preparing children for academic success means embedding literacy instruction within a rigorous content-based framework for knowledge-building (Memo 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Having multiple literacy curricula and programs in use within and across classrooms.</td>
<td>2. If teachers are expected to assemble a curriculum by pulling from a number of sources, they need an overarching framework to assemble these into a cohesive approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Selecting a curriculum based on sales and marketing, including free sample materials, and making a decision within too tight a timeframe.</td>
<td>3. Selecting a curriculum requires a team-based process that is informed by unbiased guidance, the needs of the setting’s children and adults, and a pilot phase that enables thorough review.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-Study for Impact: Lead the Conversation!

Use this checklist to guide the selection of comprehensive curricular resources. A comprehensive curriculum has the following:

**Think Rigorous!**

- Content-based units of study. Units should combine:
  - purposeful, explicit opportunities for developing knowledge-based competencies
  - systematic and explicit instruction that targets skills-based competencies

*Why these features?* A curriculum that promotes comprehensive literacy development embeds skills-based competency instruction in language-rich and content-rich units of study.

**Think Cohesive!**

- A long-term plan for teaching and learning that includes structured, daily lesson models
- Consistent unit features to facilitate teaching and learning
- Supporting materials that provide additional review and practice of the content taught in class

*Why these features?* A curriculum with these features will support instructional coherence and consistency within and across classrooms and grade levels.

**Think Engaging!**

- A classroom arrangement with literacy-enriched learning centers featuring a wide variety of books and visuals
- Structured learning tasks and routines that promote interactive play and inquiry

*Why these features?* Educators need clear steps and quality materials to create a literacy-enriched learning environment that is structured, interactive, and engaging.

For More on This...

The Oregon Reading First Center provides a Consumer’s Guide to Evaluating a Core Reading Program.

The Best Evidence Encyclopedia and the What Works Clearinghouse provides information about research-based reading curricula.

---

This series was made possible by the PreK-3rd Grade Initiative at Harvard Graduate School of Education and the generous funding of the W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation. The content is informed in part by Turning the Page: Refocusing Massachusetts for Reading Success, commissioned by Strategies for Children.

Find this memo and others at http://langlit.gse.harvard.edu