

Providing guidance for leaders dedicated to children's literacy development, birth to age 9

THE IMPORTANCE OF USING A LITERACY CURRICULUM

The Issue: It's a big job to design cohesive, rigorous literacy instruction, especially instruction that promotes language and knowledge building. Yet many teachers are expected to both design and deliver literacy instruction day-after-day, and month-after-month, throughout the school year.

What Are Some Common Pitfalls That Impede Impact?

Common Pitfalls	What We're Learning
1. Providing teachers with literacy frameworks or standards without providing supportive instructional resources.	1. A curriculum provides content and pedagogical strategies educators need to help children meet standards.
2. Thinking of a curriculum as something that limits teachers' choices and effectiveness.	2. A high-quality curriculum is a resource that creates a platform for supporting good teaching.
3. Having too many different instructional approaches and programs in use, limiting opportunities to develop shared professional knowledge and practices.	3. A curriculum is a tool for institutionalizing professional knowledge and effective practices across classrooms, programs, and settings. (This is especially critical in settings with high staff turnover.)
4. Having too many different instructional approaches and programs in use, creating a disconnected learning environment for children as they move from classroom-to-classroom and grade-to-grade.	4. A curriculum is a tool for building the kind of instructional cohesion children need to accumulate skills and knowledge over time.

Self-study for Impact:

Use these guiding questions to determine how you are supporting instructional design so that teachers can focus on instructional delivery.

Supporting Teachers

- ◆ Are educators at each level able to draw (primarily) from one curriculum to deliver high quality and comprehensive literacy instruction that meets standards?
- ◆ Does the curriculum lend itself to staff-wide professional development (Memo 8)?
- ◆ Do educators have a shared professional language that enables them to discuss and refine their instructional approaches and practices (Memo 9)?

Supporting Students

- ◆ Is a curriculum in place that provides the site's children with a cohesive learning experience as they grow, meeting standards at each level?
- ◆ Does that curriculum support instruction of comparable quality across classrooms (Memo 1)?
- ◆ Do at-risk and struggling readers receive support that is aligned with daily literacy instruction?

For More on This...

Check out the Winter 2011 issue of the [American Educator](#), featuring articles on how a quality curriculum is necessary for achieving the Common Core Standards.

Highlights include:

- ◆ *The Spark of Specifics* by D. Senechal
- ◆ *Beyond Comprehension* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr.

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