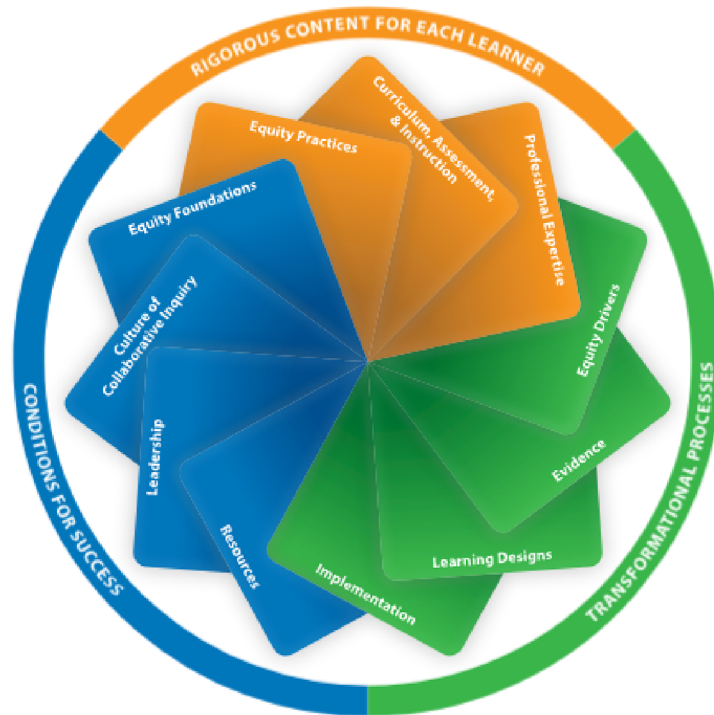


# Curriculum, Assessment, & Instruction



## Standards for Professional Learning



LEARNING FORWARD

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**Professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators prioritize high-quality curriculum and instructional materials for students, assess student learning, and understand curriculum and implement through instruction.**

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Educators prioritize building their capacity to understand curriculum and instructional materials, aligned assessments of and for learning, and teaching strategies in the classrooms they influence or lead. They understand the overall vision for student instruction that is tied to student standards and curriculum and their role in its implementation. They build and use the knowledge, skills, and practices essential to effectively identifying, adapting, and using high-quality instructional materials, assessing student learning, and creating engaging classroom experiences for each student.

As part of their job-embedded learning focused on the use of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials, educators incorporate data from aligned assessments as part of cycles of inquiry and continuous improvement.

While those educators with authority to lead a [system's, school's] or organization's overall strategy for student success are responsible for providing access to high-quality curriculum and instructional materials, every educator places a high priority on understanding what constitutes high-quality curriculum and instructional materials and knowing how to ensure learners have equal access to them.

Here are the main constructs of the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard.

## **Educators prioritize high-quality educational and instructional materials.**

Recent research clarifies the importance of the quality of the curriculum and instructional materials in use in classrooms and the role of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials in achieving equity in schools. When school and system leaders prioritize the identification and use of high-quality curriculum, more students learn at higher levels. It is critical that professional learning focus tightly on the identification, understanding, and use of those materials.

Learning Forward defines curriculum as a coherent blueprint for achieving defined learning outcomes as outlined in student standards. Curriculum includes the core instructional or curriculum materials, aligned assessments, scope and sequence frameworks to pace learning, lesson plans, and supplemental student materials to achieve learning goals.

While curriculum can serve as the umbrella term for the comprehensive suite of aligned guidelines, texts, and resources, instructional materials as a term often signifies the wide range of resources that classroom teachers in particular draw on to enact the vision of the curriculum. Educative elements to the materials provide specific support for the educators using the instructional materials.

Depending on their roles, educators may be responsible for identifying and selecting high-quality curriculum and instructional materials. This responsibility requires developing particular knowledge, skills, and practices. To become proficient in identifying which instructional materials are high-quality for their subject area, grade level, and context, educators build capacity to recognize standards alignment, cultural relevance, usability, and accessibility. Educators also develop capacity to recognize whether and how curriculum and instructional materials represent a diversity of voices, perspectives, and experiences.

All educators have a responsibility to become skillful in advocating for high-quality materials, whether to secure resources to invest in such materials, help peers and other educators embrace their use, or serve as leaders in identifying which high-quality curriculum materials to purchase or acquire. Trusted third-party sources for curriculum reviews help educators understand and apply criteria to identify high-quality curriculum and instructional materials.

Educators without access to high-quality curriculum and instructional materials identified and acquired by the school system focus on building their collective capacity to understand what high-quality means, strengthen what they have, adapt free resources they identify as high-quality, and create curriculum materials as needed to ensure student access to essential content.

Schools and school systems have a responsibility to recognize when educators are in the position of adapting or creating their own materials. When schools and school systems don't prioritize providing high-quality curriculum and instructional materials, they are responsible for ensuring educators have access to professional learning that builds their capacity to ensure equity of student access to high-quality materials.

### **Educators assess student learning to advance progress.**

While the Evidence standard focuses on the use of multiple sources of data to inform professional learning, this component of the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard focuses on building educator capacity to meaningfully assess student learning.

Educators develop an understanding of a variety of assessment approaches, both summative and formative, that can effectively inform instruction. They build their capacity to assess students' prior knowledge and experiences as part of instructional planning.

Educators use assessments that are tightly aligned with their curriculum to understand whether students are making progress toward achieving standards and ensure equity of access to learning and content in their classrooms. They build their knowledge and skills in understanding what constitutes alignment between curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

They match their assessment approaches and uses to the goals and approaches of the curriculum and instructional materials in use in their context. They increasingly develop and hone their knowledge, skills, and practices related to which assessment approaches to use when and what purposes various assessment approaches are best suited to achieve.

Alongside their peers, educators learn the value of common assessments to align student learning and achieve ambitious equity goals. Educators also develop capacity to create common assessments and when and how to use them.

As educators establish equity of access to grade-level learning for each student in their sphere, they build their skills and practices in recognizing that a diverse range of assessments is essential for a diverse classroom of learners, learning to identify which assessments are appropriate for which students, maintaining a focus on rigor and high expectations, and which assessments or assessment approaches may serve as barriers to achieving equity.

Those students who are English learners, for example, may need opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in ways that differ from those students who are not English learners.

Educators build their capacity to use formative assessments for and of learning to frequently and informally monitor learner progress and inform future lessons. They focus their learning not only on how to adjust instruction and use of materials in response to student data, but also on how to continually improve and expand their own expertise in assessment strategies.

Educators learn to use student work and classroom artifacts to gauge, document, and celebrate student progress. They also develop capacity to engage students in assessing their own learning and that of their peers.

In addition to assessing students' content understanding, educators gain proficiency in using a range of strategies and tools for assessing student engagement during instruction so they can adjust their instruction to increase engagement and participation.

Educators develop expertise in more formal assessments as well, recognizing their roles and responsibilities in pacing and administering end-of-unit and end-of-course assessments. They build their skills and practices in communicating to students and families about assessment results and implications in addition to using that information to inform instruction and planning. Educators also build their capacity to account for high-stakes assessments, as relevant, in pacing classroom curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

## **Educators understand curriculum and implement through instruction.**

When educators have access to high-quality curriculum and instructional materials, professional learning focused on implementing them becomes part of their daily work. The equity promise of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials requires that educators strengthen their knowledge and skills in using those materials, developing practices so each student experiences grade-level instruction.

School and system leaders create aligned plans for ongoing, job-embedded professional learning so that all educators continually strengthen their knowledge, understanding, and use of student materials.

Educators engage in professional learning that mirrors what and how students learn using the instructional materials for their classes, including incorporating similar activities, opportunity for inquiry and productive struggle, group work, and a combination of synchronous and asynchronous formats. They learn to adapt instruction to be culturally relevant and meaningful to the students they serve.

Educators study and understand the overall arc of the curriculum, the scope and sequence of units and student content and their alignment to student standards, and the implications for pacing teaching and learning. Educators develop the knowledge and skills to adapt instructional and curriculum materials for students who need additional support to achieve grade-level standards, focusing on essential concepts and bringing materials to life.

Educators learn strategies to recognize and make meaning from student misconceptions to adjust their teaching. They understand and apply a combination of instructional practices to maintain the rigor of classroom content and ensure students' access and opportunity to learn.

Educators learn about high-quality curriculum and instructional materials in phases, from the introduction of materials to their sustained and improved use over time. Educators experience deep dives into conceptual understanding of new materials at the launch phase of new curriculum, often with support of district-level leaders or external vendors with relevant expertise.

Educators continue to strengthen their capacity for implementing materials through cycles of job-embedded collaborative learning examining specific units and lessons throughout the school year. They sustain their expertise over the lifespan of any curriculum materials, continually improving and refining instruction based on classroom data and student learning outcomes.

Technology's role in teaching and learning changes constantly, and educators build expertise in using a range of digital tools and platforms. The instructional materials educators select are chosen for their high quality, content, and relevance, as well as format. Therefore, educators build their capacity to use ever-evolving tools to create engaging learning for students.

Educators develop capacity to implement their high-quality curriculum and instructional materials in blended, hybrid, and remote teaching contexts as their curriculum and circumstances require. They learn to use technology for communication and relationship building, to convey information and complex concepts, for student assessment and engagement, and to build an open and collaborative learning environment with and among students. They study the potential for reaching students in innovative ways by leveraging evolving technologies. Educators also develop knowledge, skills, and practices to integrate digital and multimedia resources seamlessly with the face-to-face learning environment.

### **Selected research**

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**Boser, U., Chingos, M., & Straus, C. (2015, October).** *The hidden value of reform: Do states and districts receive the most bang for their curriculum buck?* Center for American Progress. [cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/06111518/CurriculumMatters-report.pdf](http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/06111518/CurriculumMatters-report.pdf)

**CAST. (2018).** *Universal Design for Learning guidelines.* Author. [udlguidelines.cast.org/EdReports.org](http://udlguidelines.cast.org/EdReports.org)

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**Steiner, D., Magee, J., & Jensen, B. (with Button, J.). (2018, November).** *What we teach matters: How quality curriculum improves student outcomes.* Learning First. [learningfirst.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/1.-What-we-teach-matters.pdf](http://learningfirst.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/1.-What-we-teach-matters.pdf)

**Student Achievement Partners. (n.d.).** *Principles for high-quality, standards-aligned professional learning.* Author. [achievethecore.org/file/5433](http://achievethecore.org/file/5433)

### **Links to other standards**

Educators use the Standards for Professional Learning together to inspire and drive improvement. Each of the 11 standards connects to the other standards to support a high-functioning learning system. **Here are some of the ways the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard connects to other standards:**

Through the Learning Designs standard, educators engage with content and instructional materials just as students do to become familiar with the intended learner experience.

In the Culture of Collaborative Inquiry standard, educators learn collaboratively in cycles of continuous improvement, focusing on specific student learning content and goals.

The Equity Practices standard and the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard are tightly linked as educators build capacity to create learning and implement materials in ways that are culturally relevant and accessible to every learner.