

What Is an Educative Curriculum?

By Isabel Sawyer | Categories: Professional Development, Thought Leadership

Here at Collaborative Classroom, we talk a lot about curriculum that is designed not only to support student learning but also to teach teachers and improve their practice. Ultimately, we want a student to be a better reader and writer while at the same time helping his first grade teacher have a better understanding of how to teach a young child to read—the importance of phonics and sight word instruction, fluency, reading from real books, and so on. I sometimes describe our program as “working ourselves out of a job.” The goal is that teachers will learn and grow so much just from using Collaborative Literacy that they won’t need to use it any longer.

To this end, I am writing a series of blogs to understand the nature of educative curriculum better. First, I want to explore this question:

What are some of the features of an educative curriculum?

To answer, I turned to research.

The first researchers who stepped into this arena and attempted to define an “educative curriculum” were Ball and Cohen in 1996. They boldly suggested that curriculum resources had the potential to support not only students’ learning but teachers’ learning as well. They encouraged curriculum developers to do three things: **cross boundaries** by making lesson and unit goals and rationales explicit to support teacher learning, **improve instruction** by focusing not just on fidelity to the program but on implementation as an opportunity for teacher professional learning, and become **partners in practice** with educators by addressing teacher learning as well as student learning.

In 2002, another pair of researchers took Ball and Cohen’s three suggestions a bit further. Schneider and Kracjik created five guidelines for curriculum developers. They suggested that developers:

1. Describe exemplary instructional practices in the teacher’s manual.
2. Situate teacher learning within the context of the lesson.
3. Link different knowledge areas within lessons in order to support teachers and students making connections.
4. Offer short scenarios or models of practice as examples.
5. Address immediate needs for understanding as teachers plan for their lessons.

Of course, we can design resources that include educative elements, but it always depends on the reader’s (teacher’s) interaction with the text and the content to determine how much is actually learned.

In 2005, Davis and Kracjik offered design principles to make educative teacher manuals more accessible. Educative resources should:

- Support teacher knowledge of the subject matter.
- Help teachers anticipate what learners might say or do in response to activities.
- Help teachers consider how to relate units throughout the year.
- Make visible the developers’ pedagogical judgments.

- Promote a teacher’s pedagogical design capacity for making adaptations for learners.

As curriculum publishers we have the opportunity with educative resources to impact not only student learning but also to change teacher practice. I would argue that we should not leave this up to chance—we have an obligation to do this.

Look for my next blog, in which Kelli Cedo will describe educative curriculum in action in her school district!

Bibliography

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