

What Is an Educative Curriculum?

By Isabel Sawyer | Categories: Professional Learning



Here at Collaborative Classroom, we develop curriculum that is designed not only to support student learning but also to teach educators and improve their practice—in short, an educative curriculum.

Ultimately, we want students to flourish as readers and writers, while at the same time helping their classroom teachers thrive as educators by continuously honing their teaching practices and developing a deep understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction.

To this end, I am writing a series of blogs that explore the nature of educative curriculum. First, I want to explore this question: ***What are some of the features of an educative curriculum?***

To answer, I turned to research.

Defining an Educative Curriculum

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.

Ball and Cohen 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
- **become partners in practice** with educators by addressing teacher learning as well as student learning.

Key Features and Guidelines

In 2002, another pair of researchers took Ball and Cohen’s three suggestions 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 Krajcik 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.

An Opportunity and an Obligation

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

Want to learn more about the power of an educative curriculum?

Read my next blog post, [What Does an Educative Curriculum Look Like in Practice?](#) in which literacy leader Kelli Cedo describes educative curriculum in action in her district.

Bibliography

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