

Talking points

High-Quality Curricula and Team-Based Professional Learning: A Perfect Partnership for Equity

When all students experience high-quality teaching, they are more likely to learn. When all classrooms are filled with high-quality instructional materials, students are more likely to learn. Establishing these conditions for all learners will help close achievement gaps. Explore *High-Quality Curricula and Team-Based Professional Learning: A Perfect Partnership for Equity* for rationale, lessons from practitioners, and action steps: learningforward.org/perfectpartnership

The rationale

- Research has found that effective teaching and high-quality materials both matter for student learning.
- Effective use of curriculum requires teachers who understand it deeply and use it with intentionality and professional judgment, based on their particular context and the needs of their students.
- While teacher learning teams epitomize the ESSA definition of professional learning, there is still much more needed to achieve their intended outcomes.

Lessons learned from successful districts

Selecting high-quality, aligned curricula is key. Strong curricula allow teachers to focus on raising student achievement through implementation and data analysis instead of looking for supplemental materials.

Using a standards-aligned curriculum well requires skillful professional learning. Implementing a new curriculum — and knowing when and how to adjust or make modifications to address specific student needs — requires professional learning that enables teachers to actually experience, understand, and practice with the new materials.

Investing in leadership at the school and district levels is essential. Considerable time and effort are needed to ensure district and building leaders are deeply familiar with the new curriculum. This is important because these leaders are constantly making decisions about resource and time allocations, human capital management, and teacher evaluations and observations, all of which can influence how well a curriculum is used.

Ensuring expert teacher leaders is also important. Teacher leaders often take the lead in facilitating learning teams, keeping people focused and on task when there are so many issues in schools that demand their attention. Teachers need the expertise to not only lead teams but also offer content and pedagogical support and serve as models for assuming collective responsibility.

Effective team learning is part of a larger instructional improvement and learning system. Learning systems, in Learning Forward's language, are systems that improve continuously, where every educator at every level works as a learner, dedicates themselves to continuous improvement, uses data to drive decisions, and monitors and adjusts their practices based on feedback.

Download the full report at learningforward.org/perfectpartnership