

ESSENTIALS

■ CURRICULUM REFORM

Curriculum Reform in the Nation's Largest School Districts
Center for American Progress, August 2018



A troubling number of U.S. school districts are failing to use highly rated instructional materials, according to this report. Researchers identified math and English language arts materials used by the nation's 30 largest districts, then examined how those materials stacked up on two well-regarded rating systems.

Of the 25 districts that responded to a survey, 10 were not using any highly rated materials. Even more concerning, 23

of the 25 were using or recommending materials with low ratings. Moreover, only 18 of the 30 districts made available on their websites information about their instructional materials, limiting the ability of parents and policymakers to be informed and to advocate for change.

The researchers did find a handful of districts they considered exemplary in the selection and use of materials, but they call on states to provide more supports and incentives so that districts will adopt such materials and engage in the professional learning central to realizing their potential.

<https://ampr.gs/2RkXrYD>

■ LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Opportunity Myth:
What Students Can Show Us
About How School Is Letting
Them Down — and How To Fix It
TNTP, September 2018

Why are so many high school graduates unprepared to succeed in college? That was the question driving TNTP's investigation of what students in five diverse districts are learning and experiencing in school.

After observing nearly 1,000 hours of classes, 5,000 assignments, and 30,000 "in-the-moment" student survey responses, the researchers concluded that students had inconsistent access



to learning opportunities. Many assignments were not grade-level appropriate, and only 16% of the lessons observed were rated as high quality.

These patterns were particularly pronounced for low-income students. Yet when low-income students had more access to grade-appropriate teaching, their learning grew by several months. Teacher surveys further supported the finding that low-income students' teachers were more likely than others to hold low expectations.

<https://opportunitymyth.tntp.org/>

■ NEW TEACHER MENTORING

Federal Grant Analysis Shows
Promising Impact of NTC Trained
Mentors on Teacher Practice
and Student Achievement
New Teacher Center, September 2018

Research continues to mount about the value of mentoring, especially for teachers early in their careers. With support from a U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation (i3) grant, the New Teacher Center is examining a large-scale expansion of its mentoring supports for new teachers.



A preliminary report found that students in grades 4-8 gained up to six additional months of learning in math when their teachers were engaged in the mentoring model, as compared to students whose teachers participated in traditional professional support.

It also showed that new teachers who participated for two years were more effective at engaging students and using assessments as part of instruction than those who did not.

<http://bit.ly/2CD8aJI>

■ DIGITAL RESOURCES

Navigating the Digital Shift 2018:
Broadening Student Learning
Opportunities
*State Educational Technology
Directors Association, 2018*

Digital resources are playing an ever-increasing role in instruction, but schools often lack guidance about how to choose them wisely. This study found that the number of states with policies and guidance is growing: 26 states have digital learning repositories, 15 have dedicated funding for digital resources, 19 provide guidance to publishers interested in selling digital materials, and between 23 and 31 have some guidance about accessible digital materials. Among the study recommendations is professional learning for districts and schools to select and implement digital resources well.



<http://bit.ly/2D7PC5a>