

## Is your professional learning curriculum-based?



BY LEARNING FORWARD

**C**urriculum-based professional learning focuses on the implementation of high-quality instructional materials in ongoing and meaningful ways that lead to improvements in teachers’ instruction and students’ learning. Although it may sound straightforward, curriculum-based professional learning is about more than simply studying the materials. It is not uncommon for educators to confuse curriculum-based professional learning with more simplistic orientations to curriculum or with other forms of high-quality professional learning.

Curriculum-based professional learning includes educators experiencing the curriculum in the role of students, examining both the content and pedagogy necessary for effective instruction, and deepening their facility with the curriculum over time. It is grounded in high-quality educative curriculum materials, which have not only rigorous content for students but information for teachers that builds their own knowledge and implementation of the content.

### Curriculum-based professional learning does:

- Focus on the integrity of implementation of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials that are highly rated by independent assessors (e.g., EdReports) and include educative components that build educators’ knowledge of content and pedagogy.
- Engage educators in the same kind of inquiry-based learning they are expected to provide for their students — for example, by working through

curriculum lessons and engaging in continuous improvement cycles to examine their strategies and test improvement ideas.

- Use active and collaborative learning experiences that encourage teachers to challenge their beliefs, improve their instructional practices, and expand their content knowledge — for example, through PLCs, grade- or school-level teams, coaching, and improvement cycles.
- Align with the principles of high-quality professional learning outlined in the Standards for Professional Learning.

### Curriculum-based professional learning does not:

- Consist solely of sessions focused on orientation to the curriculum or instructional materials.
- Focus on content outside of the curriculum and instructional materials or on building teachers’ content knowledge in ways disconnected from the curriculum.
- Rely on siloed or disconnected learning sessions with no progression of skills and lessons over time.
- Use curricula that have not been vetted for quality and effectiveness.

The tools on the following pages are designed to help you understand the difference between curriculum-based professional learning and other approaches, determine whether you are currently engaging in curriculum-based professional learning, and consider next steps for standards-aligned implementation.

## ARE YOU ENGAGING IN CURRICULUM-BASED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING?

**Instructions:** Consider the characteristics of curriculum-based professional learning in the left column and mark whether your professional learning addresses that characteristic. Then note how you are addressing it and how you could begin or improve your efforts to do so.

Characteristic of curriculum-based professional learning	Does your professional learning do this? (Yes/ no)	What are some examples of how you do this (if applicable)?	How could you improve this aspect of professional learning?
Focuses on implementing high-quality curriculum and instructional materials.			
Includes active, inquiry-based learning experiences grounded in the curriculum.			
Is ongoing and builds over time (not one-and-done).			
Helps educators challenge beliefs, change instructional practices, and expand content knowledge.			
Supports educators to reflect on and apply their learning in the classroom.			

### Questions to consider and discuss

- Describe aspects of curriculum-based professional learning in which you are currently engaged and how you can build on them.
- What aspects of curriculum-based professional learning are you missing, and which will you address first?
- What additional information or resources do you need to strengthen your curriculum-based professional learning?

# TOOLS

## MAKE THE SHIFT TO CURRICULUM-BASED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

**Instructions:** The following table describes shifts in design and structure that are necessary to move from traditional professional development to high-quality curriculum-based professional learning. For each aspect, begin by considering where you are in making this shift. Then determine where to focus your efforts by ranking each aspect as a low, medium, or high priority and circle those that are currently a high priority.

<b>Less emphasis on</b>	<b>More emphasis on</b>	<b>Current practice</b> On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (all the time), where are you today on this shift?	<b>Future goal</b> How much of a priority is this shift for you right now? (low, medium, high)
One-size fits all approach for learning about instructional materials.	Different learning designs that support educators at different stages of learning about the materials.		
Top-down approach that aims to passively impart instructional strategies to educators.	Collaborative learning in which educators co-construct meaning and understanding of the curriculum.		
Feedback and reflective practices used solely during monitoring and assessment.	Feedback and reflective practices embedded in every phase of educator learning.		
Change as a one-time event.	Change as a process that occurs over time.		
Learning about instructional materials limited to curriculum orientation or summer sessions.	Learning with instructional materials occurs all year.		
Collaborative groups organized by choice.	Collaborative groups organized by grade levels and subjects using the curriculum.		
Prioritizing multiple goals during professional learning community (PLC) time.	Protecting professional learning community (PLC) time to focus on instructional materials.		
Focusing all professional learning on early-stage implementation of instructional materials.	Engaging in professional learning that addresses early use, ongoing support, and capacity building for implementing instructional materials.		

**Source:** Adapted from *Transforming Teaching: The Elements, Professional Learning Series* by Stephanie Hirsh. [www.curriculumupd.org/learning-materials](http://www.curriculumupd.org/learning-materials)

## WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND INSTRUCTION STANDARD?

**Instructions:** The Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard of Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning can help educators shape curriculum-based professional learning and build high-quality instructional practices. The standard states: **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** (Learning Forward, 2022).

Circle or highlight your role in the following table to review how you can support the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard in your school or system’s professional learning. Then answer the reflection questions below the table.

For more information about how to move from initial to ideal implementation on each construct of this standard and learn how to implement this standard in concert with the other 10 standards, go to [standards.learningforward.org/ic-map-tool/](https://standards.learningforward.org/ic-map-tool/)

Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction			
The table below illustrates how leaders at different levels contribute to achieving the desired outcomes for this standard.			
System/Central Office	Principal	Coach	External Partner
<b>Construct 1: Prioritize high-quality curriculum and instructional materials.</b>			
Builds <b>own and others’</b> capacity to develop and implement policy and guidelines on high-quality curriculum to promote equitable learning opportunities for all students.	Builds <b>own and staff’s</b> capacity to develop and implement school-based guidelines on high-quality curriculum, aligned with system policy, to promote equitable learning opportunities for all students.	Builds <b>own and colleagues’</b> capacity to implement school-based guidelines on high-quality curriculum, aligned with system policy, to promote equitable learning opportunities for all students.	Builds <b>own and clients’</b> capacity to develop and implement policy and guidelines on high-quality curriculum to promote equitable learning opportunities for all students.
Builds <b>own and others’</b> capacity to select high-quality curriculum and instructional materials using established criteria.	Builds <b>school leaders’, staff’s, and community members’</b> capacity to contribute to the selection of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials using established criteria.	Contributes, by <b>building the capacity of colleagues</b> , to the selection of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials, using established criteria.	Builds <b>own and clients’</b> capacity to select high-quality curriculum and instructional materials using established criteria.
<b>Construct 2: Assess student learning to advance progress.</b>			
Builds <b>own and others’</b> capacity to understand a range of student assessment purposes and approaches and to determine their alignment to high-quality curriculum.	Builds <b>own and all instructional staff’s</b> understanding of student assessment purposes, approaches, and their alignment to high-quality curriculum.	Builds <b>own and colleagues’</b> understanding of student assessment purposes, approaches, and their alignment to high-quality curriculum.	Builds <b>own and clients’</b> capacity to understand a range of student assessment purposes and approaches and to determine their alignment to high-quality curriculum.
Builds <b>own and others’</b> capacity to use student assessment data to inform decisions about curriculum and instruction.	Builds <b>own and staff’s</b> capacity to use student formative and summative assessment data to inform decisions about curriculum and instruction.	Builds <b>own and colleagues’</b> capacity to use student formative and summative assessment data to inform decisions about curriculum and instruction.	Builds <b>own and clients’</b> capacity to use student formative and summative assessment data to inform decisions about curriculum and instruction.

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# TOOLS

Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, <i>continued</i>			
System/Central Office	Principal	Coach	External Partner
<b>Construct 3: Understand curriculum and implement through instruction.</b>			
Builds <b>own and others'</b> capacity to understand and implement high-quality curriculum.	Builds <b>own and staff's</b> capacity to understand and implement high-quality curriculum.	Builds <b>own and colleagues'</b> capacity to understand and implement high-quality curriculum.	Builds <b>own and clients'</b> capacity to understand and implement high-quality curriculum.
Builds <b>own and others'</b> capacity to adapt instruction and use of instructional materials based on knowledge of students.	Builds <b>own and staff's</b> capacity to adapt instruction and use of instructional materials based on knowledge of students.	Builds <b>own and colleagues'</b> capacity to adapt instruction and use of instructional materials based on knowledge of students.	Builds <b>own and clients'</b> capacity to adapt instruction and use of instructional materials based on knowledge of students.
Facilitates the use of technology to support <b>systemwide</b> implementation of high-quality curriculum.	Facilitates the use of technology to support <b>school-level</b> implementation of high-quality curriculum.	<b>Facilitates the use</b> of technology to support implementation of high-quality curriculum.	<b>Facilitates the use</b> of technology to support implementation of high-quality curriculum.
Monitors and measures the impact of <b>systemwide</b> curriculum-based professional learning on the implementation of high-quality curriculum.	Monitors and measures the impact of <b>school-level</b> curriculum-based professional learning on the implementation of high-quality curriculum.	<b>Contributes</b> to monitoring and measuring the impact of curriculum-based professional learning on the implementation of high-quality curriculum.	<b>Contributes</b> to monitoring and measuring the impact of curriculum-based professional learning on the implementation of high-quality curriculum.

## Reflection questions

- What are you doing well to address the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard?
- What areas and steps do you need to focus on more?
- What resources will you use to improve your implementation?

## REFERENCE

**Learning Forward.** (2022). *Standards for Professional Learning*. Author.



More resources about the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction standard are available at **standards.learningforward.org**. They include:

- Full text of the standard
- Standards Vignette: Achieving the Benefits of New Curriculum
- Advancing Outcomes tool that highlights challenges caused by omitting the standard
- Role-specific Innovation Configuration maps