



A Resource to Support the Local Curriculum

by Stacey Bruton



Have you ever been in a conversation about learning targets, and the textbook was called the curriculum? At first, it may seem like a simple error of using the wrong term. However, a common belief among some educators is that the textbook or resource is a curriculum. The curriculum is the knowledge and skills students should know and be able to demonstrate. A resource is a tool used to provide instructional support **to teach** the curriculum.

Misconceptions about textbooks.

A textbook is a curriculum. Those who have not experienced local curriculum development may have this belief. A local curriculum should be aligned to standards, include scaffolding learning topics, and incorporate what is important at the grassroots level. An aligned resource needs to support the local curriculum allowing flexibility in instructional methods, but not be the curriculum. Resources are not limited to texts and may include manipulatives, equipment, online support, guest speakers, and field trips.

Textbook authors always know best. Many well-educated people usually participate in developing a text, but do they really understand the student population for which the local curriculum is intended? Local teacher experts are more familiar with their school community population and are specifically trained to meet their needs.

The entire textbook has to be covered in sequential order. This belief is to prevent possible gaps in student learning. While it sounds like a great idea, the reality is far from the intention. It is impossible to ensure guaranteed and viable learning with this approach. There are many topics included in the textbook to allow teachers some options and flexibility when teaching. Does covering the entire textbook even allow an in-depth study of essential topics? Maybe, but a concept of *covering* material and getting through the text could replace true mastery of learning.

This textbook is thoroughly aligned with my state standards. Textbooks are designed to be broad enough to address standards in many states. This cost-effective approach of lumping everything together is to obtain mass sales from potential customers. Textbook companies will provide alignment charts to show their product aligns to the standards from all states. Be cautious when accepting this document at face value. Do the homework yourself and find the cognitive level AND the entire content of the standard expectation. You may be disappointed to discover the only “match” is a word or two on a page.

What should we do now?

Selecting resources to support the local curriculum requires careful consideration of many factors. In the CLI Model, we recommend resource adoption after implementing and validating the draft curriculum. The resources should align with the curriculum, support student learning, and address the instructional needs of teachers. During validation of the curriculum, teachers have identified specific materials they have used to teach the topics and found some favorites. Carefully evaluate those materials for how well the entire curriculum is supported.

In order to make the best choice, teachers should use a rubric with qualitative descriptors to assist with the selection. Consider incorporating these questions: Was there information about all outcomes? Were there plenty of support materials, including online, to help with student learning? Were there formative checks of learning to help prepare for the next steps?

After a thorough evaluation, the Subject Area Committee (SAC) brings their choice to the Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC). If the SAC’s recommendation is accepted, the next step is for the CCC to go to the board to approve and adopt the chosen resource.

Using the adopted resource to support the local curriculum

How do you make the most of your newly adopted resource? First, it is a great idea to have solid

professional development for all staff utilizing the materials. Arrange an opportunity for teachers to ask questions, try out the technology, and explore the support materials soon after the resource arrives.

Good planning involves a variety of instructional strategies, differentiation for student learning, and checking student understanding. These areas are a part of CLI's Instructional Planning Resource (IPR) and are in most resource packages. Also, consider using the suggested cross-curricular connections to maximize instructional time and relate academic content.

When developing local assessments, both formative and summative, teachers could review the resource's test bank of questions for ideas. Questions should only be used as written if there is complete content and cognitive alignment with the local curriculum. Modification of the resource questions is also an option to create alignment.

When is the best time to start a resource review?

It takes time to determine which resource is the best fit for a district. Utilize the first semester of the school year to carefully evaluate options so the SAC and CCC can recommend their choice to the board of education shortly after the second semester begins. If the board approves, a district can place the order right away unless there is a public review policy. Either way, the timeframe should still be in the window so materials can arrive by the end of the current school year. Proper planning for the implementation of the new resource can follow.

While all of these steps are necessary, it is essential to remember that the goal is to support student learning of the local curriculum. Making the resource request with that goal in mind will increase the chances of student success.