

Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment represent the heart of teaching and learning. Put simply, curriculum is what we teach, instruction is how we teach, and assessment is how we know students are learning. Together they form the basis for what we do with and for our students.

“**Curriculum** typically refers to the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the learning standards they are expected to meet; the units and lessons the teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; [and] the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course” (taken from *The Glossary of Education Reform*).

While curriculum and assessment are the bookends—what we want students to know and be able to do and then determining whether they learned it—instruction is where the magic happens. **Instruction** is where the teachers utilize their expertise of students and the art and craft of teaching to determine the best way for students to reach and achieve the standards of what we want them to learn. It can look different for individual students, change from year to year, and vary from classroom to classroom. They are the methods we use to teach students.

“**Assessment** refers to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, and/or educational needs of students” (taken from the Glossary of Education Reform).

A Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction seeks to provide a **guaranteed and viable** curriculum for all students. This phrase originally came from the work of Dr. Robert Marzano, a highly regarded voice in the field of education. A guaranteed and viable curriculum is the variable most strongly related to student achievement at the school level.

Guaranteed means that regardless of what teacher a child has or what school a child attends, we guarantee that the learning expectations (knowledge and skills) are the same. The instruction will not be identical, as teachers bring their own instructional uniqueness to their classrooms and respond to the uniqueness of their students. Yet, whether referring to two fourth grade classrooms or two U.S. History classes, at its core, the curriculum will reliably address identical learning goals, identical measures of success and hold the same opportunities for student achievement.

Viable means that the provided curriculum is realistic for students to achieve. It is readily accessible, developmentally appropriate, and challenging when suitable. Teachers can reasonably expect students to master each grade level’s learning targets/standards.