

Preface

School districts face overwhelming challenges of declining resources coupled with increased expectations from state standards, high-stakes assessments, charters, vouchers, and “No Child Left Behind.” A standards-based curriculum, developed by a school district’s best teachers, may seem like a far-fetched solution to complex and interrelated problems. After all, curriculum does not have much of a history of making a difference. “Isn’t it really just the right combination of textbooks and program initiatives along with dynamic leadership . . . if we could only get it right?”

After you read this book, you will know that creating a standards-based curriculum is the most cost-effective way to address standards, assessments, and “No Child Left Behind.” This book is intended for school boards, superintendents, principals, school leaders, teachers, and university professors who are interested in addressing state standards in a comprehensive way and also in improving student achievement.

Research forms the foundation for the book’s first section, which considers the following:

- Textbooks
- Standards
- State and standardized assessments
- The power of alignment

The second section of the book describes the structure used in this curriculum model (the Balanced Curriculum) and provides a unique and validated way to define the curriculum so that it is both useable and useful for teachers, principals, curriculum directors, and superintendents in their quest to help more students attain standards and higher test scores, while maintaining balance so the high-stakes assessments do not overwhelm teachers’ innate good sense about what is most important.

Most of the book’s third section is devoted to the use of field-tested practices in implementing, managing, and revising the curriculum to take advantage of new information from students’ unit assessments, yearly assessments, and teachers’ feedback so that the curriculum continues to play a central role in district and school improvement. A final chapter summarizes results from school districts and schools writing and implementing the Balanced Curriculum model.

Throughout the volume, vignettes based on experience in writing and implementing the Balanced Curriculum across the country demonstrate how teachers, administrators, and parents have conquered the challenges of the effective, but demanding, Balanced Curriculum model.

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