

A Policy Briefing on Curriculum and Instruction

CTA believes schools must have the resources to provide the learning conditions that help students gain the skills to function effectively in our complex democratic society. Standards should be developmentally appropriate and clearly defined, and teachers must participate in their creation and implementation. High school graduation requirements must consider the needs of the diverse student population, and no one should be denied graduation on the basis of a single state or district mandated test or measurement.

Standards-Based Instruction

Standards must be developmentally appropriate and describe clear expectations for what students should know and be able to perform. Teachers must participate in the planning, development, implementation, and refinement of standards. All students must be provided the instructional opportunities and learning conditions necessary to attain the standards. Standards, curriculum and assessment should be linked to provide a well-rounded education. State adopted standards should be reviewed prior to revisions of curriculum frameworks and/or the adoption of textbooks.

Curriculum

Students should have access to a curriculum that prepares them for post-secondary education and leads them to meaningful and informed occupational choices. Curricula should address the common values of the society; promote respect for diversity and cooperation; and prepare the learner to compete in, and cope with, a complex and rapidly evolving society. Students should acquire these skills through instruction in decision making, critical thinking skills, and traits of good citizenship. The major focus of the curriculum should be the development of higher order thinking skills based on key concepts and generalizations selected from all academic and vocational disciplines. Teachers should have the pivotal role in the development, definition, and implementation of curriculum and should comprise a majority of all committees making or recommending decisions in the area. Ensuring student access to curriculum, universal internet access, supportive programs for their parents to acquire technical skills, and necessary technology when distance instruction is implemented is crucial to student success.

Graduation Requirements

Teachers should play the central role in developing, defining, and implementing graduation requirements. Graduation requirements should be well-balanced and broadly based, including provisions for both general education (i.e. the common learning or core curriculum required of all students) and specialized education (i.e. career/technical education and college preparatory education).

Instructional Materials

The individual educator is the most qualified person to select instructional and supplemental materials that meet the diverse needs of learners. Selection of instructional materials is an ongoing process and a wide matrix of current quality instructional materials should be available in each area of pupil instruction in order to meet the needs of California's diverse pupil population and teaching styles. Consistency with the state adopted standards, frameworks and excellence of materials should be the criteria for adoption. Instructional materials used for literacy development for English language learners' instruction in English should align to both the English Language Arts and the English Language Development standards. A majority of teachers appointed by the exclusive representative must be involved in selecting district instructional materials. The state should provide all pupils textbooks and/or other instructional materials from the current approved list in each area in which adoption is made. Teachers should constitute the majority of the Instructional Quality Commission and of each state level Instructional Materials Evaluation Panel.