

Session Transcript: 28-05-2020 University of Penn - C-SAIL 20/20 Breakout #1

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

Hello everyone. Welcome to our breakout session on the role of core curriculum materials in standards implementation. My name is Morgan Polikoff. I'm going to moderate this session. On the codirector of C-SAIL., Associate director of education at USC Rossier school of education. My co moderator is Shira Korn who works with me. She is finishing up her dissertation. She will be monitoring the questions you ask and feeding them to the portion of the panel.

In terms of logistics, the audio is muted. We have muted attendees for the duration of the session but that does not mean we are not interested in hearing what you have to say. We are hoping you can ask questions using the questions box which is on the go to webinar control panel on your screen. Shira will be monitoring and posting your questions to the panel. Please do pose questions there throughout. Also there is closed captioning available. Live captioning is available at the URL there. Use the gear icon in the live caption window to change the font.

And also, just so you know, my husband is also on a resume conversation in the other room so this is as far apart we can get in the house of the might be a tiny bit of background noise from him. These are realities of life in a pandemic. Now it is my pleasure to introduce the panel. Palace you're welcome to turn your cameras on at this point. Julia is currently leading the... School leaders about how they use curriculum materials in the classroom. I know it was yesterday or the day before they released COVID specific survey results in informing and providing important evidence in real-time. So thank you very much. Julia welcome.

Rachel Bradshaw is currently the senior director of literacy and humanities at the Tennessee Department of Education. In January she was with the Massachusetts Department of elementary and secondary education. She is originally from Honolulu and began her career as a high school teacher in Boston. Hi Rachel.

Cat Still is an executive director of ELPA21. Prior to joining the team at Crest she worked as a program director for ELPA21 at the Council of Chief State school officers.

Kate Watts is an elementary school principal in the Monson public schools. She previously taught Spanish and served as a reading specialist in the district.

I invite everyone to open this up with two or three minutes of thought about their role of curriculum materials or curriculum materials in standards implementation. We will go in the order that I introduced people. Julia if you would like to go first.

JULIA KAUFMAN:

Thank you so much. I have been doing research on curriculum implementation for about 15 years or so. First as a postdoctoral fellow and now as a policy researcher. I think one of my big early takeaways from this research is that teachers can take the exact same curriculum material and plan a lesson that looks very different depending on what messages or supports they get from their district, what activities they choose to focus on, what they choose to modify and what other materials they bring into their lesson. Not only will that lesson look very different in the planning stages but even teachers lesson plans can end up looking very different in the advanced stage because of so many different reasons just how the students handle a task, how they have been prepared all your to handle a task, how they have been prepared in previous years to handle tasks and how the teacher reacts.

That's why am not surprised we get so much mixed research on whether curriculum adoption makes a difference for student learning. Our research suggests that what matters is not just the curriculum. It's all the teacher views and uses the curriculum. How the teachers in the district or school supports it. And now remote learning today adds another variable to the mix and I fully suspect that teachers use of curriculum will be even more variable and diverse in this challenging time especially because we are seeing the districts messages on how much the curriculum can be used are variable and diverse.

Morgan mentioned that we are doing a lot of survey research. I am leading the brand American instructional resources survey which is digging deeper how teachers across the United States are using the curriculum. We have national levels of principles and state level samples with 11 partner states and these have been so useful to us in helping us to think about what questions to ask and get them the questions that help support teachers and schools better.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

Thank you very much. Next up for opening remarks will turn to Rachel.

RACHEL BRADSHAW:

Hi everyone. Good morning or afternoon depending on where you are. As I was trying to figure out how to condense the role of curriculum materials in standards implementation into a three minute dialogue here I think I have decided that the best way I can sum up how I would put it is that curriculum really shows us or curriculum materials rather really show us what the standards we are trying to implement are what they are not. Take that first point of how curriculum shows us what standards are. In both states I have worked in Tennessee in Massachusetts, there been an enormous demand from educators for what I call a (unknown term) at the standards. What does this mean? Can you give us commentary or examples. What are the expectations and the standards that are fairly abstract look like in real life practice. That is an understandable demand, right? Just a quote one representative standards in high school ELA is determined the team are the central idea of the text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details.

That's a lot. I think what curriculum does, one thing curriculum does for teachers, curriculum

materials show them that. More than any abstract commentary they can provide about this is how we are using this word in the standards in this is what we really mean. The curriculum really shows how the standards can come to life. If it is good and is aligned to standards. Obviously.

Think a lot of time people are asking for standards clarification guide resources it's really good curriculum that would help them understand the standards. I also made the claim that it shows us what standards are not. When I'm saying that and thinking of a principal in Massachusetts who at the start of our campaign therefore improving curricular the quality and alignment with standard said to me I do want my teachers working with curriculum. I want my teachers working directly with standards in translating those into instruction. My response was kind of yes and. Because yes but I think there's a combination but it's a pretty quick leap from students to instruction.

And it's really not that the whole full-time job in there and then is developing curriculum. Creating coherent conference of curriculum that organizes the standards that makes them accessible to all the students in the room. It is an enormous task. So while there is a model in which teachers are responsible for that task, as well as implementing curriculum, I think that model requires teachers to have a ton of time, a ton of intellectual bandwidth because just implementing is very taxing job in itself and the ability to coordinate very closely across grade levels to ensure vertical alignment.

So it is hard. I think just looking at curriculum products out there in the bulk it has to them helps make the point that often needs to be made that standards are not curriculum. Standards are outcomes in its curriculum that really organizes the standard of instruction. The last thing I want to recognize quick to echo some of the earlier speakers is although a lot of my efforts at the state level have focused on strengthening curricular materials in the implementation that is not a silver bullet any more than standards-based performance. Both Massachusetts and Tennessee's are taking conference of systematic approaches aligning curriculum and standards to assessment to teacher leader in evaluation, engagement and professional learning and that is actually essential.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

Thank you very much. Next up I'm going to turn it too.

CAT STILL:

Thanks Morgan. I speak from the perspective of English learners and include English learners in instruction and assessment. I would Echo Julia and Rachel both in the impacts of how the standards are implemented does have a big effect from how curriculum is used in the quality of that curriculum. From my perspective speaking about the role of curriculum and curriculum materials and supporting English learners mastery of the standards, we feel the curriculum should be just that, supporting. We should not be asking English learners to know more and demonstrate more than their non-EL peers for example. To the standards we hold these English learners could reflect the language demands in their classrooms scaffold with the language proficiency level of the English learner. The curriculum should then support the diversity of these English learners and allow them to access classroom content and make meaning. For example students studying the Civil War. Non-EL students are required to read the resources information and create a 3-5 minute presentation with slides. The

curriculums could support English learners by suggesting alternate pathways by....

English learners will be allowed to read resources in their home language or have English sources translated or read aloud depending on the students proficiency level. These oral presentations that English learners do could be adapted to allow more visuals or graphic organizer versus a full 3-5 minute spoken presentation or another option would be to allow the student to deliver the presentation in their home language. Thus, we can meet standards-based goals such as learning about the Civil War and use curriculum to differentiate the way learning is accessed and demonstrated based on the proficiency level. This ties back to what Nelson spoke to in the opening session about the key around standards and curriculum especially for English learners is in that different duration of instruction. The target is the same in the instruction should not be more or less but should instead be different to help English learners meet the same target as non-EL peers and that sustainers and curriculum can target to support English learners in the classroom.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

Great, thank you. Last but certainly not least principal Watts who I realized I introduced correctly but has the wrong information on the slide. I apologize that.

KATE WATTS:

Thanks for having me. My lens is that of a practitioner in a school and I think about the journey that our district has taken. Six years ago we did not have common assessment. We did not have any kind of curricular materials that spoke vertically or horizontally in our entire district and we are a very small rural district and so we were kind of grabbing at whatever we could to make meaning to have opportunities for teachers to engage in learning about so many of the intricacies of the standard.

And so what we tried to do is we did what a lot of districts did we use professional learning communities. We leveraged the educator evaluation tool and all the opportunities that the state afforded us as well to be able to engage in deeper conversations as professionals.

And I think that being able to do that allows the teachers to really live and breathe the work. And I think that that has them as well as all of us to be shoulder to shoulder learning together over the last several years. I just think that even though it's difficult work and of course there are always going to be barriers increasingly because of which the world we are living right now I think that there is such potential when educators work together and have the support that they need. I guess that would be what I offer.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

All right. Thank you all for your comments. There is a lot interested in what you across those comments which is nice. Before I get to some questions that I have planned I thought I would get a sense of who is in the room. I'm going to launch a poll give you 30 seconds to respond to this just so we know who is here so we can think about that as we are crafting our questions and answers.

We can see it looks like about 40% are practitioners teachers or administrators. A large portion of

others. I'm going to guess maybe those are parents, but I'm not sure. I am generally curious what all the others are. And then about 10% of researchers. That is very helpful.

With that context in mind I'm going to start with a few questions and then as we said, please also put your questions in the question box and Shira is monitoring those. We will turnover to those questions at some point.

I'm going to start with Kate actually. So, Kate, there can be attention providing teachers with specific curriculum guidance but giving them the autonomy to implement curriculum that works best for their students. What policies or strategies do you think work best for threading this needle?

KATE WATTS:

There is a range of approaches when it comes to curriculum implementation when it is determined at the local level. It can be impacted by the culture and climate of the district, the level of educator experience in the needs of the students. In my experience as I alluded to before we really have tried to carve out pockets of time for teachers to engage in ongoing deep dives into curriculum and into the standards and so we have worked to create vertical teams as well as grade level teams to explore components of the early literacy standards, mathematics, science technology, social emotional competency standards etc.

The teams employ an inquiry-based model and it's a cycle. They will engage in a deep dive a standard for example speaking and listening and the role of student discourse they will develop lessons and assessments to implement that standard instructionally. And then informative data is used and analyzed by the team to plan ongoing instruction.

In terms of policies, the district in which I work we do emphasize adherence to the state standards, however, the PLC model helps to allow for teachers to engage in conversations about the practice and using district purchased curriculum products.

We try to sustain cultural... Which allows this model to work for us. We recognize there are barriers and we are very honest and we get those barriers discussed and we try to again use that model of collaboration and consultation to be able to work together. I don't know if there is anything else I would want to add to that but obviously like if any of the other participants want to add anything they are more than welcome.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

Absolutely. Rachel I see your hand up.

RACHEL BRADSHAW:

The only thing I would love to say is just that the curriculum materials themselves can vary a lot in the degree to which they respect teachers autonomy and professional judgment. There's a huge difference between a script trying to be approved future proved model and it says given your expertise in the students in front of you hear some options this is how you can use your professional

judgment and expertise to make this material work for your students. Suggest choosing a curriculum that actually does that can be super helpful.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

OK. Thank you. Julia, our study focuses on math and ELA. I think you've heard the most probably about math today. Math and ELA are maybe the two subjects where curriculum materials may be the most developed. I wonder if you know anything about whether there are specific curriculum needs that vary by subject, other subject areas that you think need more attention in terms of curriculum or curriculum researcher grade levels? What do you think about that?

JULIA KAUFMAN:

Yes, I think you're totally right. A lot of the curriculum research that has been done is in math and ELA. Very little in science or social studies. We have some evidence that teachers use the curriculum quite a bit according to subject area and grade level. For the American instructional researchers survey we are collecting data on ELA math and again science which is a new subject area for us to gather data on. What we are seeing that in ELA and science for example teachers tend to use a lot of their own self developed curriculum much more than in math. They often rely on war materials compared to teachers of math. That has implications I think for districts what ELA teachers are using for instruction in kind of a lease for those materials. I think that varies indefinitely by subject area.

We are going to be putting out a report soon and we have some evidence that science teachers, in particular, are getting much less guidance about ELA and math teachers about how to use curricula. They are also more likely to say that their professional learning opportunities focused on curricula, are not as helpful as they would like them to be.

So all this to say that I think there are differences by subject area and it really is something we need more research on so we can really understand what teachers are doing in order to support them better because they are all doing different things depending on grade level and a lot of other variables.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

Thank you. I don't know if anyone wants to respond but if not I have a question for Rachel.

RACHEL BRADSHAW:

I think I wanted to jump in.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

Can you have something you wanted to say? So, Rachel we know a large majority of teachers use supplemental curriculum materials ranging from the book in the back of the room to Pinterest. What is the role of states and districts and supporting teachers' supplementation or is there not a role that those organizations should play and how do you think teachers can supplement well?

RACHEL BRADSHAW:

It's a really important question going back to Julia's initial point it's about how things actually unfold in classrooms that matters most to student achievement. I think it's helpful here to consider what is driving supplementation when it occurs. Can occur for a lot of different reasons. There's obviously, I think, an ideal case where a teacher is using a high quality core curriculum set of materials that is well aligned and has support for English learners, students with disabilities and students with unfinished learning. Of course it's not good for all students. So the teacher is building on that curriculum understanding the design features what is essential in the curriculum and what can be tweaked without lowering expectations and making those choices to supplement in ways that work for their students.

In that case, I think, curating helping match supplements with core materials in ways that form a coherent whole can be super helpful for teachers. There are also a couple of which less desirable supplementation is going on... See how their students with all of their diverse backgrounds and needs and strengths match with that curriculum.

So unintentionally or because they don't have any other records they may water the curriculum down or replace key parts of it with supplements. We see this in ELA word text get water down below grade level. Those kinds of tweaks are not as helpful, obviously to students and I really think the biggest thing that systems can do in that case is to give teachers time to dig into the materials. It is incredibly hard to turnkey someone else's lesson plan but trying to do it is terrible. So that is when things start to break down. If teachers really have the time in the professional learning opportunity to cooperate and plan and think about what about this lesson is not going to work with the students and how can I supplement in ways that really build on the core curriculum rather than undermining it or distracting from it. That is good. That is what teachers need and that's what students need.

This is becoming a dead horse but I think just giving teachers time to do that is so important and can make sure that their supplementation which is necessary in part of their job is implementation is really in ways that serve students and make teachers feel good about what they are doing the core curriculum.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

One theme I've heard repeatedly is about time. The importance of time. Will have so much time now that we are working from home. Everyone just as all the time in the room. Julia looks like you wanted to chime in.

JULIA KAUFMAN:

I just wanted to add to that. What Rachel has been saying again and again it's really hard to make sure standards aligned in good curricula is really hard. I think what she is saying about teachers supplementing for so many different reasons. They may be supplementing because they are identifying a really clear That is important to fill. They may also be supplementing because they don't understand an activity in the curriculum. We have some evidence from our surveys the teachers are really supplementing a lot when they are serving low income students that are most likely to be lower

achieving, particularly in English-language arts.

At that level there are so many intervention materials being used in teachers in high poverty schools are speaking out those intervention materials in ELA in particular even more. I think this all means, it falls to districts, schools and states to think about what kind of advice to give to teachers so they are supplementing appropriately.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

Thank you. I think probably the last question before we start getting into the questions from the audience. Thank you I see so many good questions in the question box is going to be for Cat. Cat, and my own research I found that the presence of large number of EL students can affect the textbook adoption decisions that districts make. What should districts with large numbers of English learners be looking for when they are making textbook adoption decisions or what kind of curriculum supports do teachers need as they are implementing curriculum material in settings with large proportions of English learners?

CAT STILL:

Thank you, Morgan this is an important consideration. I see it emerging more and more districts. Selecting a curriculum that considers the needs of English learners in the intent and design of resources and materials instead of as an afterthought is first critical recommendations are for districts that serve English learners. Soak selecting curriculum that comes with ideal materials and supplements is a first step. A good second step is to review the textbook through the lens of cultural relevance through the student served in the district. If you have a high population of students from a certain country see if you can find something that is culturally resonant for them. Can students see themselves in the text? Does the text contained culturally relative...

The more we can support making this connection through instruction in curriculum and supports the better we can help our English learners activate their own background knowledge to access information and instruction in lower their affected filter.

Educators can use curriculum as a springboard and add additional activities to supplemental materials at the professional discretion. A solid foundation in the curriculum and textbooks helps ensure educators with limited formal instruction in meeting the need of specifically English learners can still succeed and deliver high-quality standards-based EL instruction...

For example, our ELP standards carry the of all the college and career ready standards. And clearly describe how to instruct, support and recognize the progression of English record development.

This makes ELP standards accessible not only to EL specialist but to the content area educators and school administrators in this better helps support yells in those districts with those populations.

... That their specific performance levels and language domains listening, reading, speaking and writing. In terms of textbook adoption a culturally relevant curriculum the emphasis on college and

career ready standards in the use of academic language and discourse would for example already be appropriate for the ELPA21 standards because of those events. Curriculum with supplemental activities and resources that include English learners in classroom activity should be prioritized and inclusion should not be an afterthought.

For curriculum supports directly ELPA21 suggest educators focus on differentiating instruction. We spent a lot of time in professional learning in this. We train content classroom teachers that will facilitate English learners access to and achievement of academic content in academic English. So differentiation concentrates on distinguishing the academic content from the language skills needed to address it and that we use a research supported differentiation instruction technique and research-based academic English language framework to teach our educators to identify academic English, distinguish it from the content and the purposefully address both in their instructional practice. Thank you.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

Thanks very much. Your comments remind me that one of my students actually wrote a dissertation about an English language learner curriculum materials and studying tax and school district practices and administrators talked about the role of curriculum materials for English language learners. There were some really promising places that clearly had foregrounded their EL community in thinking about curriculum materials and some quite alarming comments about the role of curriculum materials for English learners.

Absolutely a very important issue. I have more questions on my end but I think we have some questions from the audience.

Sure I don't know if you are ready to start posing those but go for it.

SHIRA KORN:

first of all, thank you everybody. There are some really interesting questions here. Let's start with the question for Julia but everybody can chime in if you have something to add. How do you see the connection between curriculum framework or standard implementation guidance and instructional materials?

JULIA KAUFMAN:

I think you cut out at one point who are you directing that question two?

SHIRA KORN:

I am sorry about that. Would you like me to repeat it? How do you see the connection between curriculum frameworks or standards implementation guidance and instructional materials?

JULIA KAUFMAN:

I think that Rachel talked a little bit about that and that standards in themselves are not curriculum and curriculum frameworks are not curriculum either. You know, I think in a good curriculum

framework you are pointing them towards good published curriculum materials that cover, you know, the full amount of information teachers need for a course, lessons that are scaffolded and develop students learning over time.

Maybe Rachel might have something else to add to that or other panelists.

RACHEL BRADSHAW:

I think I kind of just build on what Julia was saying and what I was saying before. I think two of the big things that curriculum does that standards and curriculum frameworks don't necessarily is organize instruction. They get that sequence of learning experiences. I'm speaking primarily from an ELA lens and I know very well that the ELA standards do not serve as organizers of instruction. That's not what they do. If you use them to organize instruction have a big lesson on the main idea and then another lesson and then others purpose is not an effective way of instructing. That organization within years and across years I think is important.

And then the accessibility piece a lot of us have talked about. Standards or outcomes do not provide teachers with all the means they need to get students to those outcomes regardless of what barriers they are facing. Teachers have a lot of expertise going back to the earlier point. That is a big task to give them the tools they need to bring the students to the outcomes and the standards of the curriculum frameworks. Those are outcomes, not curriculums.

SHIRA KORN:

Thank you to you both. Let's move on to another one. This one I will direct to Kate. Can you talk about the role of embedded or formative assessments in the instructional materials and how those inform instruction and how materials are used?

KATE WATTS:

Yes, absolutely. I look at it through the lens of being a reading specialist in the use of formative assessment that is ongoing in the practice and I think that model can be utilized throughout the student's day.

We look at the task they are asked to do and then we analyze how they are able to perform the task and then from that we create plans of either extending that learning or remediating that learning so that is something that is particular and it's something that teachers gain over time.

I think that we start our careers and we have some good practices that we are engaging but I think that it's through the learning throughout our careers that we are able to really discern and become expert practitioners. I think it is through - I keep on saying the same thing but it's so important collaborating together in taking a look at student work in taking a look at videos of what students are doing and how they process information and using that to really gauge and respond to students in the moment but then also the next day and the next day and so I think that that to me is everything, everything is a formative check.

You're looking at observationally you're doing exit tickets, you are using it, you have it over your desk as you are creating next week's lesson. This is iterative in its continual.

SHIRA KORN:

Thank you for that. The next one I'm going to direct a Cat. You gave this lovely description at the end really specific about what instructional materials for English learners look like and what is practice was on that. Is a question about culturally relevant curriculum and best policies and practice. I wonder if you can expand on that a little bit to provide an example of what that might look like.

CAT STILL:

Let me pull the question up. I would say best practices for classes with students from diverse cultural backgrounds is really try to find common experiences the students can relate to each other on that lets students access construction the ways the non-EL peers can access that instruction we want to be thoughtful about removing barriers we might not even see from a monolingual standpoint that are multilingual students have to face.

There are places where they need different support and scaffolding to help them have the same classroom experience as their non-EL peers. In terms of best practices there is some information in the clearinghouse and some evidence-based resources that can be curated for classroom use. There's quite a bit out there. I don't want to necessarily call out one particular curriculum or set of resources but trying to find those common experiences that allow students to relate not only to the material but to each other to familiarize themselves and that way is a critical impact to have. Thank you for the question.

SHIRA KORN:

Great. Morgan just a time check, 1-2 more?

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

Yes probably no more than two more.

SHIRA KORN:

the next one I'm going to direct at Rachel but maybe everybody chime in. I think maybe everyone has a different perspective on those that might be useful. Is a question about districts promoting the question answer called it curriculum by Pinterest. Maybe we can more broadly think about that as supplementing from... What that looks like in terms of, in terms of district support for helping teachers choose materials and also what we know about how teachers are using those in the classroom.

RACHEL BRADSHAW:

The wording in question is what evidence do we have that districts are promoting curriculum by Pinterest versus well-designed research-based curriculum.

I want to be clear I don't think district administrators, teachers or anyone are walking around saying

hey everyone let's use Pinterest. That's a great idea. I do think a couple of other things are happening that push toward that cobble together approach to curriculum. One has a lot to do, I think, with teachers professional identity so I am coming from the lens of a former high school English teacher and this was a while ago but when I came out of my prep program I was very clearly indoctrinated to believe that if I did not create my own curriculum to some extent I was a bad teacher.

I think that's a clear force that is in certain grade levels and subject areas especially pushing teachers away from the kind of conference of core curriculum approach. It is frightening for their identity as professionals and teachers in many cases.

I think a lot of district curriculum honestly just falls under the radar. I've had assistant principal tell me you know if you at the state could convince everyone curriculum is important that would be super helpful. I don't think it's so much promoting the cobbled together approach than the lack of pushing toward hey everyone our comprehensive curriculum is going to be a priority in our district at a system level in these always to support it. The last thing quickly is just other pieces that hook into curriculum such as walk-through protocols, evaluation rubrics, those are often – they are getting there, they have made a lot of progress recently I think in aligning those to evaluate and incentivize teachers use of the core curricular materials but a lot until very recently had very little to say about that so understandably teachers are in an incoherent environment not incentivized to stick to one curriculum and really dig into it.

It's not a surprise that they look elsewhere.

MORGAN POLIKOFF:

All right. Thank you. We are up against time. Thank you to Shira for helping us identify those questions and thanks to our panel for comments and answers to questions.

We will go to the last slide for closing logistics. Thank you of course to the audience for being here and asking questions.

I encourage you to take a 15 minute break and join us in the closing session chaired by Andy Porter and with Linda. If you have not already registered to get your unique join link you can visit the URL there. All of these sessions are being recorded and will be made available on our website as well. Thank you again to our panel and our audience. I will see you in the closing session.