Supporting Educators in Improving Practice Through Instructional Materials

Can curriculum and instructional materials be developed to not only support students in building knowledge and skills, but also support educators in honing their practice? Educative curriculum materials help teachers acquire new content and pedagogical knowledge, typically through embedded notes, annotations, and models of practice. The presence of educative features in a curriculum has been shown to improve teachers' instructional planning and curriculum implementation as well as student learning.

For example, teachers using highly educative mathematics curriculum materials are more likely to identify the big ideas in a curricular program while planning collaboratively and are more likely to maintain cognitive demand and elicit student thinking during a lesson (Stein and Kaufman 2010). Research also suggests that teachers who use educative curriculum materials show increases in pedagogical content knowledge and use a greater number of strategies to support student learning (Schuchardt et al. 2017).

In 2005, researchers Elizabeth A. Davis and Joseph S. Kracjik offered five design principles to help guide the development of educative curriculum materials, stating that educative resources should do the following:

- Support teachers' learning of subject matter.
- Help teachers anticipate what learners might say or do in response to activities.
- Help teachers consider how to relate units throughout the year.
- Make curriculum developers' pedagogical judgments visible.
- Promote a teacher's capacity to make pedagogical adaptations for learners.

All Great Minds® curricula were intentionally and uniquely designed to contain educative elements because we believe in empowering teachers to not only deliver a high-quality curriculum, but also to effectively adapt it to meet the unique needs of the students in their classroom. Unlike a scripted curriculum where content is provided to educators with little to no guidance or rationale, our educative curricula help teachers improve their practice while enabling all students to achieve greatness.

Defining Educative Curriculum Materials

In 1996, Ball and Cohen introduced the concept of educative curriculum materials in their **seminal paper**, which suggested that curriculum resources themselves had the potential to support not only students' learning but teachers' learning as well. This idea differentiated educative curriculum materials from those that mainly focus on instruction without developing teachers' own content and pedagogical knowledge.

Five Educative Features Embedded in *Wit & Wisdom*®

The *Wit & Wisdom* Teacher Edition is one of the core resources that teachers use to plan for and deliver instruction. Crafted by our team of teacher–writers, the Teacher Edition includes five educative features that support teachers' own learning and help them achieve flexible, high-quality English language arts instruction for all students.

> *"Teachers can see specifically what they should be teaching. Having the end in mind makes planning so much easier."*
>
> —Bonnie Hofland,
> Humboldt County, NV

1 **Module Overviews.** Each module's Teacher Edition begins with a Module Overview that provides a summary of the learning in the module, the essential question students will explore, suggested student understandings by the end of the module, the learning goals of the module, and the module in context.

- The **Module Summary** offers educators insights into how the module was structured and why, walking through the progression of texts explored, demonstrating how knowledge is built, and sharing the End-of-Module Assessment task, a culmination of students' learning. This section shares the why behind the module—why it is structured the way that it is and what the intended learning from each part of the module is. This information helps educators see the larger body of knowledge students are building toward by the end of the module.

- The **Module Learning Goals** define the knowledge goals, reading goals, writing goals, speaking and listening goals, and language goals for the module. Educators gain a clear understanding of what standards will be addressed through this module as well as what knowledge students will have the opportunity to build.

- The **Module in Context** situates the learning of this module in relation to what students previously learned and what additional skills and knowledge they'll gain in the new module. This section looks at multiple contexts—knowledge as well as reading, writing, and speaking and listening skills.

- The **Module Map** breaks down the module by lesson, including the Content Framing Question and Craft Question(s) explored in that lesson, as well as the learning goals of each lesson.

See annotations for each component of the Module Overview in the *Wit & Wisdom* Components and Features in the Teacher Resource Pack.

2 **Lesson-Level Prepare and Analyze Sections**. These two sections, found in every lesson, provide educators guidance about the purpose of the lesson and modes of assessing its success.

- Every lesson begins with a **Prepare** section that provides the lesson's guiding questions and summarizes the lesson. In this section, educators learn what students do in the lesson, the relationship between activities, and how the lesson's learning connects to at least one broader module goal.

- Every lesson ends with an **Analyze** section that explains the lesson's assessment, whether it was a Check for Understanding (CFU) or another major assessment. The Analyze section provides context for understanding the assessment, including the standards aligned with it and how it relates to the lesson's and module's learning goals. This section also helps teachers plan Next Steps for scaffolding learning when students are still striving toward success with particular tasks.
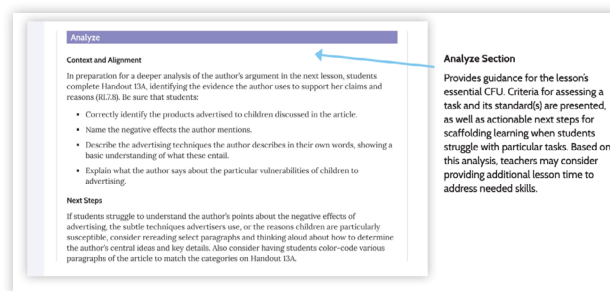
"Having a high-quality curriculum means they can focus on mastering the craft of instruction, not creating or searching for curriculum."
—Colleen Stearns, director of ELA, IDEA Public Schools

3 **Lesson notes.** Throughout lessons, educators will encounter several types of embedded instructional guidance in the Teacher Edition. These notes provide information about facilitation, differentiation, and coherence.

- **Teacher notes** communicate tips and other information that help with implementing the lesson. Teacher notes may provide 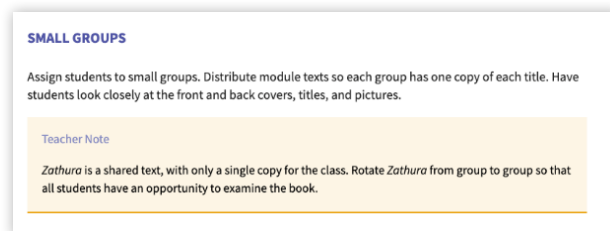just-in-time content-specific information to educators, explain pedagogical choices, or support educators in helping students achieve greater independence in their learning.

- **Differentiation suggestions** provide targeted ways to help meet the needs of specific learners based on teachers' observations or other assessments. There are three types of supports: scaffolds, differentiation, and extensions. Teachers can use these suggestions to support students in the moment or to advance learning for students who are ready for more of a challenge.
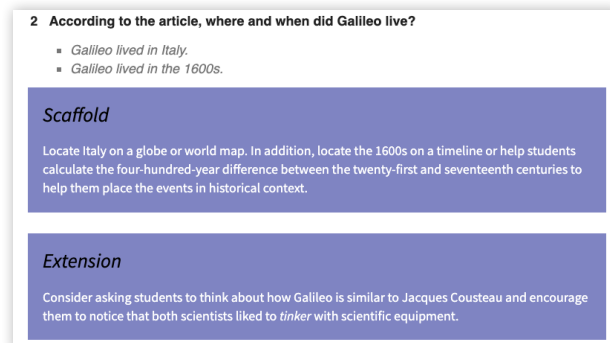
"What I know now that I wish I knew in year one is that nothing is in the curriculum by accident. Nothing is in there that hasn't been very carefully and thoughtfully placed there. So if you get to something and you feel like it's disposable, it really isn't."
—Sarah Lyle, Grade 8 Teacher, Knox County Schools, TN

4

Lesson-Level Sample Dialogue is suggested language to use or adapt during instruction. Language may be provided for a Think-Aloud or to help explain a challenging topic. *Wit & Wisdom* is not a scripted program. Occasionally, specific examples of what the teacher might say are given to provide an example of a thoughtful, instructive way of presenting information, suggest how much to say about a specific topic, or demonstrate possible content of what to say.

Read the paragraph aloud. Model for students what they should be looking for in the writing. Below is a sample Think Aloud:

Look how this writer has a clear opinion statement.

(Place a checkmark on a sticky note near the sentence.)

Right here, the writer has included a supporting reason.

(Place a checkmark on a sticky note near the sentence.)

I like how the writer has used evidence from the text here.

(Place a checkmark on a sticky note near the sentence.)

I'm going to reread this part. I'm not sure that the writer has explained how the evidence supports the reason. Let me show you how to do that.

(Place a question mark and comment here.)

Listen to the concluding statement. I like how it closes the paragraph by restating the reason.

(Place a checkmark near the sentence.)

5

Lesson-Level Sample Student Responses are sample exemplar student responses to suggest the focus and scope of student understandings for the lesson. If students struggle with a question after ample wait time, educators can consider offering one of the examples to spur additional thinking and/or asking students a question based on one of the examples.

1 **Is the article an example of fiction or informational text? How do you know?**

- *The article is an example of informational text.*
- *I know this is an informational text because the author begins by giving an exact date and information about Galileo's age.*
- *I know this is an informational text because the article refers to real people and places.*
- *I know this is an informational text because the article gives dates for real events.*
- *I know this is an informational text because the article mentions the title of a published book.*

2 **According to the article, where and when did Galileo live?**

- *Galileo lived in Italy.*
- *Galileo lived in the 1600s.*

Educator Resources for Supporting Multilingual Learners

Equitable instruction means equipping every learner with access to high-quality, grade-level materials for academic success. That's why we developed *Wit & Wisdom Prologue*™, a new collection of supplementary lessons designed to support multilingual learners and students with language-based disabilities in grades 6–8. **Learn more about the Great Minds approach to supporting multilingual learners, review the research, and view annotated lessons.**

Works Cited

Ball, Deborah Loewenberg, and David K. Cohen. 1996. "Reform by the Book: What Is—or Might Be—the Role of Curriculum Materials in Teacher Learning and Instructional Reform?" *Educational Researcher* 25, no. 9 (December): 6–14. **https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X025009006**.

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