

How Can ESOL and Mainstream Teachers Make the Best of a Standards-Based Curriculum in Order to Collaborate?

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In this era of high-stakes testing, teachers are often required to follow a standards-based, standardized curriculum, which can be constraining for English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) and mainstream teachers who are trying to meet the needs of English language learners. Despite the challenges presented by such curricula, this study found that one advantage of a standardized, standards-based curriculum is that it can support collaborative efforts between ESOL and mainstream teachers. This research emerged from a university-school district professional development partnership with 26 ESOL and mainstream teachers across 11 elementary schools. This study examined different ways that ESOL and mainstream teachers worked together using a standardized curriculum as a key tool for collaboration. Data collection involved surveys, interviews, and observations of collaborative teaching and co-planning and interviews with three focal teacher pairs before and after they cotaught lessons. The authors found that the ways the teachers used, adapted, and took ownership of the curriculum as a tool for collaboration may have been even more important than the curriculum itself. This study has implications for teachers, schools, and teacher educators considering tools or structures that may already be in place, or that need to be created, which could serve as a common touchstone for collaborative efforts.

doi: 10.1002/tesj.23

In this era of high-stakes testing and accountability, teachers are often required to follow a standards-based and often standardized curriculum (Au, 2011; Vogler, 2005). Using this kind of curriculum can be challenging for both mainstream and English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) teachers and may be viewed as constraining for teachers as well as students. For example, Enright and Gilliland (2011) discuss the problems of a narrowly defined curriculum: "... these standards and accountability-based policies that claim to promote equity for diverse learners actually constrain forms of instruction, types of texts with which students engage in classrooms, and finally, conceptions of learners themselves" (p. 184). Furthermore, teachers may view the prescriptive nature of such curricula to be difficult to follow at the pace intended or with the students for whom it is designed (Wright & Choi, 2005).

Despite these and other challenges presented by such curricula, we argue that one advantage of a standardized, standards-based curriculum is that it can support collaborative efforts between ESOL and mainstream teachers (see also Martin-Beltrán, Peercy, & Selvi, 2012; Peercy & Martin-Beltrán, 2011). This teacher collaboration, in turn, may offer opportunities for expanding or enriching the curriculum and better supporting the needs of English language learners (ELLs; Davison, 2006; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Haynes, 2007; Hoffman & Dahlman, 2007; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010; Rushton, 2008). In this article, we shed light on different ways that ESOL and mainstream teachers worked together using a standardized curriculum as a key tool for collaboration. We argue that the ways the teachers used, adapted, and took ownership of the curriculum as a tool for collaboration may have been even more important than the curriculum itself.

CONTEXT

This research emerged from a university–school district partnership that aimed to improve the teaching of ELLs by providing a 5-month professional development series for 26 teachers across 11 elementary schools. The schools that participated in the professional development program were chosen by district administrators based on high ELL populations

and low performance, and school principals recruited at least one ESOL and one mainstream teacher to act as instructional leaders at each of these schools. This large urban and suburban school district in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area has experienced a rapid increase in its ELL population (approximately 15% of the district's total student population) in recent years. Some of the schools participating in this project had as many as 75% of their student population classified as ELLs.

This 5-month professional development series was collaboratively created and cotaught by us (teacher educators at a local university) and leaders from the district's central ESOL office. We acted as both professional development facilitators and researchers; we aimed to engage teachers as constructors of knowledge and praxis (Johnson, 2006; Sharkey, 2009). The professional development series discussed research-based instructional strategies to meet the needs of ELLs (based on the work of Bailey & Butler, 2003; Cary, 2007; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Harper & de Jong, 2004; Herrell & Jordan, 2008; Rothenberg & Fisher, 2006; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Yatvin, 2007) and explored the benefits and challenges of ESOL-mainstream teacher collaborative planning and collaborative teaching. Meeting together monthly, ESOL and mainstream elementary teachers had the opportunity to learn more about each other's professional expertise and brainstormed ways that the two groups could support each other in their instruction of the ELLs in their schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

We used complementary research methods to learn more about teacher collaboration in this district. We collected survey data from 23 teachers in the larger cohort who participated in our professional development series and asked about their experiences collaborating or communicating with other teachers. We also conducted in-depth qualitative research (which included observations of coteaching, coplanning, and interviews) with three ESOL-mainstream teacher pairs in three schools.

Two of the teacher pairs were using a plug-in model; the other was using the district's more commonly used pull-out model (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Haynes, 2007). Teachers using the

plug-in ESOL model did not remove students from the classroom but incorporated ESOL instruction within the regular classroom instruction. We found that plug-in instruction could take many forms, ranging from two teachers separately instructing small groups during center time to two teachers teaching together in front of the whole class. The first pair, Kathleen (ESOL teacher) and Gina (second-grade teacher), were using a plug-in model during language arts time every day. The second pair, Dorothy (ESOL teacher) and Hannah (second-grade teacher), were also using a plug-in model during language arts period daily. The third pair, Samantha (ESOL teacher) and Tanya (kindergarten teacher), were using a pull-out model in which Samantha removed a small group of ESOL students from their regular classroom to provide more individualized instruction in her room.

We found great variation in terms of instructional goals and connection with the regular classroom among teachers who were implementing pull-out instruction. For example, prior to this professional development series, many teachers using the pull-out model admitted that they did not know how their own instructional goals related to their counterpart teacher's goals. Because teachers in the professional development were required to plan two lessons together, we found that teachers discovered and created new connections across the curriculum. From these three pairs, we collected data on their collaboration efforts and experiences through observations of their teaching and coplanning, and from interviews before and after they cotaught lessons. In this article, we focus on how these teachers used a standardized curriculum as an important tool that helped them leverage collaborative efforts for teaching ELLs.

To analyze the data from the three teacher pairs, we examined interview transcripts and observation notes using a grounded theoretical approach, identifying themes that were important to the participants in the open coding stage (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During the axial coding stage, we examined the data for challenges and opportunities for collaboration, and the curriculum framework emerged as an important topic mentioned by teachers as they discussed both successes and difficulties of collaboration. During the selective coding stage, we sought to understand how

collaborating teachers used the curriculum as a tool for collaboration.

FINDINGS: SHARING A COMMON TOUCH-POINT AIDS COLLABORATION

The teachers in our study repeatedly mentioned the use of a standardized tool, the district's curriculum framework (CF), as a key reference and an important tool for communication among teachers about daily and weekly teaching and learning objectives. We collected survey data from 23 teachers (13 mainstream, 10 ESOL) and asked how they knew what the other teachers were teaching in their classroom. The majority of the teachers (83%, or 19 out of 23) of the teachers mentioned the CF as their first reference point for communicating with other teachers. They explained that the CF was often referenced in weekly lesson plans or calendars that were shared across grade-level teams.

The teachers' reference to the CF reflects a national trend following No Child Left Behind regulations in which "standards-aligned, state-approved textbook packages have become a central organizing factor for local curriculum development" (Enright & Gilliland, 2011, pp. 183–184). Likewise, the reading/language arts curriculum (the focus area for collaboration between the ESOL and mainstream teachers in this study) was tied closely to the adopted textbook series, which was designed for use in the mainstream classroom. The CF was a 300-page document that contained a pacing calendar; state reading/English language arts standards; themes; titles of whole-group and small-group reading selections; and daily lesson outlines that included objectives, skills, and suggested activities following ideas from the teacher's manual of the adopted textbook series. On its website, the district curriculum office explained that the English language arts/reading curriculum was based on the state curriculum and that the standards, goals, indicators, and objectives were aligned to the reading textbook that the district had adopted. The English language arts/reading content objectives were categorized as skills in listening, speaking, phonemic awareness, comprehension, vocabulary, spelling, and writing. The ESOL standards were not explicitly tied to the

mainstream curriculum, and it was mainly the ESOL teachers' responsibility to find the connections in order to meet the needs of ELLs.

Although the CF was perceived by many teachers as a top-down mandate coming from the school district's central office, several classroom teachers were involved in the writing of the curriculum. Experienced ESOL and mainstream teachers were hired by the school district during the summers to write or revise the CF for the next school year. They worked together with central office staff, including the chief academic officer, the director of curriculum and instruction, and the director of academic support. As ESOL specialists joined this writing team, they began to incorporate ESOL modifications in the mainstream curriculum. Many of the mainstream teachers in our professional development series explained that they were not aware of the recent ESOL modifications to the curriculum. It was only after talking or coplanning with their ESOL counterparts (during the professional development series) that they learned more about the English language proficiency standards and suggested ESOL modifications.

The summer after our study was completed, one of the leaders from the district's ESOL office (who was our collaborator and coteacher during the professional development series) created an ELL supplement to the CF—an instructional guide with strategies to support ELLs' language development across the content areas. She explained that the district did not want to create another separate ESOL curriculum; instead the language-based instructional guide was meant to integrate the state's English language proficiency standards into the state's mainstream curriculum. The supplemental CF guide focused on reading strategies and skills that were in the mainstream English language arts curriculum and highlighted language demands that teachers should target to develop ELLs' academic language. This supplement included language objectives, description of grammar features, activities to support vocabulary development, and teaching aids such as graphic organizers. The document (which may have been informed, in part, by our professional development series) explicitly stated that this guide was meant to support professional conversations among ESOL and mainstream teachers.

Future research is needed to examine the use of this supplemental language-based instructional guide.

At the time of our study, most teachers across the school district used the same CF and mentioned carrying this cumbersome document with them to grade-level team meetings as well as the ESOL coplanning events. However, as we discuss in this article, not all teachers used the CF in the same way. We found that teachers who were willing to spend more time together coplanning and coteaching were less dependent on the CF, whereas those teachers with the least time to collaborate mentioned the CF as more critical in their communications and attempted connections.

As we analyzed data from observations and interviews to understand the challenges and opportunities for collaboration, the district's CF emerged as a recurrent theme and an important tool that afforded opportunities for teacher collaboration and communication. Although this institutionally created curriculum was not designed specifically for the purposes of teacher collaboration among ESOL and mainstream elementary teachers, we found the teachers in our study took ownership of this CF as a tool to use in constructing their own understanding of how to connect mainstream and ESOL instruction. Their use of the CF was supported by other teacher-created tools for collaboration, such as checklists, shared assessment tools, calendars, emails, writing notes in students' work, and other tools we describe in more detail elsewhere (see Martin-Beltrán et al., 2012). We also found that the CF was a starting point for teachers to discuss their broader teaching goals or their shared teaching vision (see Percy & Martin-Beltrán, 2011).

Referring to the Curriculum Framework to Quickly Check In

One of the most common ways ESOL teachers used the CF in collaboration with their mainstream counterparts was as a reference or shorthand way of communicating and understanding the teaching and learning goals for the week. The teachers would have much of the information they needed as written text in the CF, and they simply confirmed this with each other to check for any modifications in the pacing. Many ESOL and mainstream

teachers did not have a common planning period during the school day, and even when they did, time was very limited. Dorothy, an ESOL teacher, explained that even during shared meetings with grade-level teams (four classroom teachers, two ESOL teachers, a special education teacher, and a reading specialist), there was little time to discuss ESOL student learning issues:

I try to tell them [other teachers] in 2 minutes about ESOL student learning, and the only feedback I get is, "That is great, bye, we gotta go. . . . We have got 3 minutes to say goodbye, go to bathroom, and get back to the classroom and catch our kids." There was no time left at the end for us to discuss what we needed to do as an ESOL team, and if we did, teachers are mentally already out the door. (Dorothy, Interview 1)¹

In response to the constant challenge of finding time to communicate with teachers face to face, Dorothy suggested creating a checklist for mainstream and ESOL teachers to communicate. One of the key questions from the checklist that ESOL teachers had for mainstream teachers was "Are you on the right page of the curriculum framework?" Dorothy hoped that a weekly checklist or written check-in between teachers would be a feasible way for teachers to become more aware of what ESOL students were doing with ESOL and mainstream teachers in their separate classrooms.

The following quotes from our interviews with the ESOL teachers illustrate that even a brief interaction with their colleagues about how they were using the CF offered a collaborative opportunity for both teachers to reflect on their adaptations of the curriculum and instructional priorities.

I can read the curriculum [framework] and I sort of check in with the classroom teacher: "Where are you at in the curriculum? What are you doing?" and the variations. I try to kind of keep up with that. (Dorothy, Interview 1)

I will know what story they should be on by the pacing calendar [in the CF], and usually I will check and say, "Are you on day 2 of this story or are you behind?" (Samantha, Interview 1)

¹ Interview 1 refers to the interview before the teaching observation. Interview 2 occurred after the teaching observation.

I just look at the [CF] calendar and I basically look at the week and then I go, “OK, these are the [grade-level classroom] objectives for each day. Which are the ones that I want to pick out and cover that are language based in my classroom?” And that is what I do. (Kathleen, Interview 1)

Kathleen’s quote demonstrates the ways that ESOL teachers did not simply repeat the mainstream curriculum, but rather used the CF as a document to build upon, expand, and adapt to meet the needs of ELLs.

Curriculum Framework as Shared Understanding of Common Teaching Goals

Although one of the focal pairs with whom we worked, Hannah (second-grade teacher) and Dorothy (ESOL teacher), expressed their difficulties collaborating and coteaching, the CF provided a document around which they communicated about concrete ideas. Dorothy acknowledged that if she was able to use the language of the CF in her communications with Hannah and explain how she would build upon or modify that curriculum, it facilitated their collaboration and made her feel recognized as a legitimate partner by her mainstream counterpart. During Hannah and Dorothy’s coplanning session, we observed them moving quickly through the CF, discussing which of its activities they would or would not have time to do and who would take the lead.

Another focal pair, Tanya (kindergarten teacher) and Samantha (ESOL teacher), did not usually coplan or coteach, but as part of our professional development series they did engage in one session of planning together. We observed them drawing from the CF, the mainstream reading textbook, and the ESOL pull-out textbook to connect their otherwise separate instructional periods. In the coplanning interaction we observed, using the CF as a shared starting point for discussion allowed the teachers to engage in reflective, collaborative dialogue about student learning.

Mainstream teachers who were working in schools where the pull-out ESOL model was most common explained that they did not usually know what the ESOL teachers were doing with students. One of our focal mainstream teachers explained that she

wanted the ESOL teachers to explain how the ESOL teaching was supporting what the mainstream teachers were working on in the mainstream class in terms of the CF. Thus, we found that the CF played an important role in helping teachers coordinate instruction, whether they were collaborating regularly on their instruction or pulling students out for ESOL instruction.

Using the Curriculum Framework to Prioritize Differentiated Instruction

Teachers who had more time to coplan and coteach explained how their use of the CF went beyond quick check-ins, how they used it as a tool to make sense of learning objectives, to ask their coteachers questions, and to coordinate activities that the teachers were planning. Kathleen (ESOL teacher) stated that the CF was a tool that helped her make sense of her colleagues' teaching goals during grade-level team meetings when curriculum was discussed amid other weekly teaching demands:

I can say, "OK, based on what I am hearing, this is not getting covered, or this is getting covered." So I usually take a highlighter and my curriculum framework [to our grade-level team meetings], and I just highlight. So I can kind of see what people are saying that their kids are doing. (Kathleen, Interview 1)

Kathleen took ownership of the curriculum by physically marking (highlighting) the text, and she adapted the CF as she actively prioritized teaching objectives in relation to her colleagues' instruction. Kathleen also explained that she used the CF as a basis to help guide her planning for groups of students she pulled out of class, even when she was not regularly coplanning or coteaching with mainstream teachers.

Gina (a mainstream teacher) also described using the CF as a tool for prioritizing shared teaching and learning goals:

And I think it is also important to be willing to share the curriculum with the ESOL teachers because . . . especially when they plug in, they are not doing their own thing, they are meshing with you, so you need to be aware, well aware, of the curriculum and share all that knowledge with the ESOL teachers and make sure that they are on the same page. Because you need to

look at the curriculum equally as well to know what you need to bring in to scaffold. (Gina, Interview 1)

Gina explained that sharing curriculum creates necessary connections that improve collaboration between mainstream and ESOL teachers. Teachers are not isolated or “doing their own thing”; rather, it was important that the teachers should be “on the same page.” The CF represented a shared knowledge base or starting point for the teachers so they would know where each would bring in her expertise to modify the curriculum.

Dorothy (ESOL teacher) also illustrated the importance of the CF for coordinating instruction with her colleagues when she explained in her interview that she was more invested in her reading and use of this tool because she knew she would be involved in a collaborative teaching model whereby she would talk with another teacher about the curriculum:

I took the initiative to read the curriculum ahead of time in second and fifth grade, and I actually helped to write the curriculum for fifth grade last year. So I know the mainstream curriculum really well. In second grade, I knew I was getting into this [plug-in coteaching model], so I read the book and I read the curriculum and was familiar with it. (Dorothy, Interview 1)

Teachers used the CF as a way to make sense of their own and their partner’s teaching goals and also to efficiently communicate and coordinate their instruction with one another. We observed teachers expanding learning opportunities for ELLs as they discussed the different ways that the ESOL teacher and the mainstream teacher would approach the learning goals set out in the curriculum. If the teachers understood where their colleagues were in the CF, collaboration was not duplication, but rather support or modification of the same curricular goals. For example, Samantha (ESOL teacher) explained how she would supplement the whole-class reading text of the week (in the mainstream CF) with additional activities that included using realia for vocabulary development and providing hands-on experiences to make content relevant to ELLs. When they coplanned their reading lessons for the first time during the professional development series, Tanya

(mainstream teacher) explained that Samantha opened her eyes to new ways to teach the same story of the week, which would better support the ELLs in her class. Hannah (mainstream teacher) explained how Dorothy (ESOL teacher) brought in supplemental technology, graphic organizers, and multimedia resources to build upon the CF, which Hannah recognized as a benefit of the plug-in coteaching model. Using the CF, Dorothy and Hannah were able to make clear decisions ahead of time about who would take on the responsibilities of lead and support teaching during large-group instruction. For example, they decided that Dorothy would lead the large-group read-aloud from their reading textbook while Hannah would act as what they called the *interrupter/modifier*, calling attention to areas that might present difficulties for students by using a think-aloud approach.

We found that when trying to plan instruction in ways that most strongly supported ELLs (in terms of scaffolding mainstream content), it was helpful for the ESOL teachers when teachers at the same grade level were all using the same curriculum as a shared tool. We discuss one of the drawbacks to teachers using differing curricula next.

The Alternative: No Common Curriculum Framework

We found a contrasting case in Samantha's (ESOL teacher) school, where different fourth-grade classroom teachers had adopted different textbooks. The four fourth-grade teachers were able to choose among three different reading curricula (based on reading programs from textbook publishers), and consequently they did not all follow the district's common CF (which was based on one of these three reading programs). Samantha pulled out all of the fourth-grade ESOL students together, yet she found it very difficult to support the mainstream classroom activities, which varied greatly because they each used a different curriculum. She explained that for other grade levels (using the same CF) she typically would frontload (teach a few days in advance) vocabulary and reading strategies that ESOL students would need when they began the next reading unit in their mainstream classrooms. Samantha explained that close connections with the mainstream classrooms were almost impossible when she did not

have a common tool like the CF around which to center her planning and coordination with the different fourth-grade teachers. Teachers explained that the CF was an important organizational tool to bring together several teachers across grade-level teams *and* ESOL levels.

Disagreement About How to Use the Curriculum Framework

Although it was evident that the CF was helpful to establish a common starting point for discussing what students needed to learn, challenges of collaboration were also revealed when teachers disagreed about teaching and learning goals set forth in the curriculum. We do not argue that a CF is a perfect or neutral tool, nor did we observe that it was utilized without disagreement; on the contrary, this framework could bring to light teachers' conflicting views of teaching and learning (see Peercy & Martín-Beltrán, 2011).

During their interviews, both Hannah (second-grade teacher) and Dorothy (ESOL teacher) referred to the CF to articulate their goals for teaching. Hannah thought that without this framework, teachers might not focus on what the students really needed to learn. She explained her thinking about the importance of clear, concrete objectives and skills for students. In contrast, her teaching partner, Dorothy, pointed out that the prestructured curriculum did not always take student variation into account. Dorothy used the CF as an example as she described their different teaching approaches:

I do know that there are teachers who give a lot less credence to the curriculum framework. I mean, they use it, but not quite as strictly. Hannah tends to be very "by the book." She wants to be on the right page, on the right day. If it says, "Do X, Y, Z, and Q," then you do have to do X, Y, Z, and Q. So that is part of her style of teaching. . . . I think [Hannah] comes to worry very much about what needs to be taught . . . this is what needs to be covered, but she doesn't think as much about *how* to cover this material or what the kids need. (Dorothy, Interview 2)

The collaborative teaching arrangement gave both teachers the opportunity to compare different ways that teachers make sense of the CF. Even as they recognized their disagreements with their

teaching partners, they were offered opportunities for growth as reflective teachers.

We recognize that the CF, and the ways teachers negotiated their use of it, was not without its tensions, but we argue that it created an important touch-point for teachers to check in with one another in order to coordinate instructional efforts in positive and meaningful ways.

Contrasting Case: Teachers Collaborate Without the Same Standardized CF, With Much Extra Time and Effort

When teaching second graders together (using a plug-in model), Kathleen (ESOL teacher) and Gina (second-grade teacher) adopted a reading program that was different from the reading program around which the district CF was built. Gina explained that their school's curriculum provided teachers with more flexibility to determine what they should teach students: "Instead of curriculum always driving your instruction, you decide where your children are and then tailor your instruction to meet them." Instead of the CF, these teachers created their own collaborative lesson plans and often brought in their own materials. During their planning time, we observed their shared negotiation of how to teach the particular objectives, and they spent over an hour going through their lesson plan for one day. Because they dedicated many hours outside of school to their collaborative planning, they did not rely as much on a ready-made written curriculum; they did their personal, face-to-face negotiation of the teaching and learning goals for each daily lesson. We observed Kathleen and Gina using a number of tools to help them interface smoothly when coteaching. For example, they developed a system of using sticky notes during student-teacher writing conferences to summarize what the teacher had talked about with each student. A sticky note was saved in each student's writing folder until the next writer's workshop, which allowed either teacher to build upon what her partner teacher had already worked on with a particular student. These written notes were a tool for communication that allowed for consistency in their feedback, regardless of which teacher was meeting with the student.

We have discussed elsewhere how Kathleen and Gina's intense collaboration was sustained not so much by institutional tools or administrative supports, but by a shared vision of teaching and learning built upon common goals for teaching and learning, a willingness to discuss disagreements, and a recognition of one another's expertise (see Peercy & Martin-Beltrán, 2011). This collaborative teacher pair was an exceptional case because, of their own initiative, they dedicated many hours to coplanning.

It is important to note that although Kathleen did not mention the CF as an important tool for collaboration in her plug-in work with Gina, she did mention using it as a tool for communication and collaboration with other teachers with whom she did not have the close collaborative relationship or the same intensive daily contact and from whose classrooms she pulled students out for ESOL instruction.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Because teachers are under increased pressure to cover standards, such requirements can often be viewed as constraining for teachers and learners. However, we have argued here that an advantage of a standards-based, standardized curriculum is that it can aid collaborative efforts between ESOL and mainstream teachers, which in turn may allow them to better support ELLs. This is particularly relevant when teachers do not have opportunities to spend significant amounts of time planning together, but rather have brief moments when they can quickly check in with one another in an effort to coordinate their instruction.

Certainly, opportunities for teachers to spend extended time planning with each other is highly valuable. And in cases in which time and other resources are available, teachers may be able to engage in more transformative development of curriculum and instructional decisions in the common enterprise of supporting the learning of all students in the school. However, when shared time and space for collaborating teachers is limited, it becomes essential to find other mechanisms, such as the CF in this district, for creating common ground among teachers in the effort to support ELLs in schools.

Clearly, the CF in this district served as an important tool around which teachers could communicate quickly and build collaborative teaching efforts. Although it is often desirable for teachers to use their professional expertise to choose the curriculum that they feel is most suitable for their students, teaching goals, and style, we found significant tension between the standardization of curricula and teachers' freedom to individually choose curricula. Several teachers complained about the restrictions and scripted boundaries of the CF, yet teacher collaboration and discussion about the CF seemed to offer a space in which to stretch those boundaries. Findings revealed that when teachers shared no common CF, it became difficult to meaningfully and realistically connect teaching goals in ESOL pull-out classrooms with mainstream classrooms. Without a common curriculum it was challenging for teachers to know where to start conversations with their colleagues in order to support stronger collaboration. We found that it was helpful for ESOL teachers when teachers at the same grade level were all using the same curriculum as a common tool. Otherwise, ESOL teachers faced the challenge of trying to support different content within a grade level, which often made planning, sequencing, and scheduling difficult for the ESOL instruction and support.

Using a common curriculum does not mean that teachers can ignore the specific needs of their student population, which are always changing. We are not recommending a one-size-fits-all instructional approach; instead we recommend that teachers use a common curriculum as a tool to negotiate their teaching goals with partner teachers as they collaboratively consider their students' learning needs.

Based on our findings, it seems that the CF in this study—though not without its challenges—allowed teachers to determine how to meet student needs, while providing all school personnel with an understanding of what content was being covered and when. We are not advocating that all schools adopt a CF, but if teachers (supported by school and district infrastructure) can work together to create a common tool and guide that enables all teachers to be aware of grade-level curriculum content and pacing, this will make it possible for them to consult and collaborate with

one another in the quick bursts of time that are generally available to them.

Although some may argue that requiring ESOL and mainstream teachers to follow the same curriculum may lead to reduced, narrow learning opportunities, we cannot rule out the possibility that the teachers who are able to share and collaborate around a common curriculum may, instead, find ways to build upon and expand what their teacher colleagues are teaching. This study did not focus on the issue of depth or breadth of curriculum, but we did observe teachers expanding learning opportunities that are not afforded when teachers are planning and teaching on their own. Teacher collaboration can bring the CF alive in terms of both teaching and learning because of the ways that teachers can communicate teaching and learning goals, clarify teaching decisions, and negotiate and evaluate teaching practices.

Thus the advantage of having two teachers (ESOL and mainstream) share a common curriculum is that they can potentially expand and enrich this curriculum in more ways than one teacher working alone can. The alternative—following two separate curricula—may lead to narrow processes that don't allow enough time to expand or cover all of the material. Collaboration may offer more opportunities to elaborate or go deeper into curriculum, with multiple opportunities and contexts for students to develop understanding of content. This has implications for teacher education, because teachers would need to be prepared to collaborate around curriculum—not as duplication, but as multiplication. More research is needed to pursue these ideas.

In conclusion, we are not recommending that teachers use a CF as the only tool or structural support for collaboration. Rather, we suggest that teachers may be able to teach ELLs even more effectively by using their standards-based curriculum as a starting point for collaboration. Therefore, teachers, schools, and districts would benefit from thinking about tools or structures that may already be in place, or from considering new structures, that could serve as a common touchstone for collaborative efforts.

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