



RESULTS OF TEACHER CURRICULUM SURVEY January 9, 2023

Below is a summary of the results of the CTA's Curriculum Survey. The survey was completed by 211 teachers in the Charleston County School District. The complete results can be found on the [Charleston Teacher Alliance](#) website.

The CTA has shared the survey results with CCSD superintendent Don Kennedy. He and his staff are attentive to the concerns and have committed to working constructively with teachers to address the issues.

I. EL ENGLISH

EL Language Arts, provided by EL Education, has been approved by the school board to become CCSD's K-12 English curriculum. [According to the EL Education website](#), the nonprofit organization's mission is "to create classrooms where teachers can fulfill their highest aspirations, and students achieve more than they think possible, becoming active contributors to building a better world." [EL states](#), "We embrace a vision of education as a powerful engine for disrupting structural racism, and fulfilling our nation's promise of equal opportunity for all. Educational equity means that all children experience these pillars of educational equity:

1. Instruction and assessment that challenge, engage, and empower learners
2. Access to standards-based, content-rich, culturally affirming curriculum
3. School culture that fosters positive identity, belonging, agency, and purpose
4. Explicit anti-racist discussion, practice, and action"

135 teachers provided their professional opinions on the EL Curriculum. Important findings include:

- 73% disagreed that they are able to modify or supplement the curriculum to best meet the needs of their students.
- 65% do not agree that the curriculum is rigorous enough to consistently challenge their students.
- 84% disagree that the curriculum allows them the flexibility to teach lessons in a way that best utilizes their strengths as a teacher.
- 81% do not agree that the curriculum is an improvement over what they used previously.
- 86% do not agree that the curriculum allows them to select what texts, projects, and assignments they think are best for their students.

- 69% disagree that they expect to see significant growth and achievement from their students as a result of this curriculum.
- 80% disagree that they are given ample personal planning time to implement this curriculum.
- 13.5% agree that they are excited about this curriculum.

In their comments, teachers identified a number of professional concerns about the curriculum, including:

- The lessons are developmentally inappropriate.
- The lessons are too long and too scripted.
- The alphabet cards are too similar and confusing for kids.
- It has too many errors.
- It lacks rigor.
- It is not engaging and students are bored.
- It does not teach isolated reading skills.
- Teachers have no flexibility: they cannot select student assignments or texts.
- It is haphazardly organized.
- The district has not provided necessary materials to teach the lessons.
- The curriculum's phonics instruction is inferior to Open Court.
- There is not enough emphasis on writing and phonics.
- There are insufficient read-alouds.
- The pacing is too slow.
- The provided texts have a strong political aim.
- It seems overly preoccupied with racism.
- Implementing the curriculum requires elementary teachers to plan 45 weekly lessons.
- Teachers are given insufficient planning time to prepare daily lessons.
- Teachers were not permitted to provide input on selecting the curriculum.
- There are too many manuals.
- Training provided by EL was substandard.
- It is weak on developing writing skills.

Recommendations:

The concerns are broad and deep enough to recommend that CCSD drop the EL Curriculum countywide. The CTA recommends that each school be permitted to select the state-approved English curriculum that best meets the needs of its students.

II. BRIDGES MATH

Bridges in Mathematics is CCSD's PK-5 math curriculum. It is provided by the nonprofit Math Learning Center. According to [the organization's website](#), their mission is "to inspire and enable individuals to discover and develop their mathematical confidence and ability. We offer innovative and standards-based curriculum, resources, and professional development. Our products and services are used by educators throughout the United States and in many international locations."

150 teachers provided their professional opinions on the Bridges Curriculum. Important findings include:

- 66.5% agreed that they are able to modify or supplement the curriculum to best meet the needs of their students.
- 55% agree that the curriculum is rigorous enough to consistently challenge their students.
- 46% disagree that the curriculum allows them the flexibility to teach lessons in a way that best utilizes their strengths as a teacher.
- 46% agree that the curriculum is an improvement over what they used previously.
- 58% do not agree that the curriculum allows them to select what texts, projects, and assignments they think are best for their students.
- 49% agree and 33% disagree that they expect to see significant growth and achievement from their students as a result of this curriculum.
- 61% disagree that they are given ample personal planning time to implement this curriculum.
- 41% agree and 37% disagree that they are excited about this curriculum.

In their comments, teachers identified a number of professional concerns about the Bridges curriculum, including:

- It requires too much preparation time.
- It offers effective opportunities, but they are difficult to find.
- It does not teach any skill to mastery.
- Teachers do not take it seriously due to a lack of trust that it will stay.
- It does not meet the needs of my students.
- Teachers are forced to follow it regardless of where their students are developmentally.
- The pace is unsuitable.
- Derivata is too time consuming and difficult for students.
- It does not match the SC Standards.
- It is good for high performing students, but others get lost.
- More practice needs to be added for students.
- It is too prescriptive and does not allow for teacher creativity.
- In order for the curriculum to be effective, teachers must supplement it.
- It is not challenging or rigorous enough.
- It does not work for near, on, or above level students; it is holding back schools where students are thriving.
- It is overwhelming for first year teachers.
- It relies on tricks and gimmicks.
- There are too many lessons per day.

Teachers also made a number of positive professional observations about the curriculum, including:

- It aligns with brain research.
- It is a balanced math program.
- It teaches students to think critically and strategically about math.

- It is developmentally appropriate.
- It is easy to use and plan.
- It has hands-on lessons.

Recommendations: The CTA recommends that teachers be given more flexibility to select the texts, projects, and assignments they think are best for their students and to teach lessons in a way that best utilizes their strengths. Also, teachers should be given ample planning time to implement the curriculum.

III. ILLUSTRATIVE MATH

Illustrative Mathematics (IM) is a non-profit organization that provides the CCSD middle grades math curriculum. [According to the IM website](#), the vision of Illustrative Mathematics is “creating a world where all learners know, use, and enjoy mathematics. Decades of mathematics achievement data show significant racial disparities that indicate an unjust educational system, where Black and Brown students in classrooms across the United States have unequal access to mathematics learning. IM is committed to racial justice through ensuring the right of every learner to engage in meaningful, rigorous, grade-level mathematics. Equipped with high-quality instructional materials such as IM K–12 Math™, teachers implementing culturally responsive pedagogy have the potential to disrupt pervasive inequities in the kinds of mathematics education that students receive.”

25 teachers provided their professional opinions on the Illustrative Curriculum. Important findings include:

- 71% disagreed that they are able to modify or supplement the curriculum to best meet the needs of their students.
- 50% do not agree and 40% agree that the curriculum is rigorous enough to consistently challenge their students.
- 90% disagree that the curriculum allows them the flexibility to teach lessons in a way that best utilizes their strengths as a teacher.
- 90% do not agree that the curriculum is an improvement over what they used previously.
- 90% do not agree that the curriculum allows them to select what texts, projects, and assignments they think are best for their students.
- 90% disagree that they expect to see significant growth and achievement from their students as a result of this curriculum.
- 50% disagree and 40% agree that they are given ample personal planning time to implement this curriculum.
- 10% agree that they are excited about this curriculum.

In their comments, teachers identified a number of professional concerns about the curriculum, including:

- It is not a cohesive curriculum.
- To be effective, it must be heavily supplemented.
- It provides no skills practice.

- It provides no time for remediation.
- It is a “one size fits all” program, but one size does not fit all.
- The order of the curriculum does not flow.
- It leaves students without notes or examples from which to study.
- Student textbooks do not provide enough space.
- It does not afford the freedom to teach in a way that works best for the class.

Teachers also made positive professional observations about the curriculum, including:

- It has resulted in powerful understanding from students.
- It has increased student confidence with math.

Recommendations: The CTA recommends that teachers be given more flexibility to modify or supplement the curriculum to best meet the needs of their students; to select the texts, projects, and assignments they think are best for their students; and to teach lessons in a way that best utilizes their strengths. Also, teachers should be given ample planning time to implement the curriculum.

IV. SAVVAS SCIENCE

Savvas’ ElevateScience is CCSD’s K-8 Science curriculum. [According to its website](#), Savvas is “a next-generation learning company that combines new ideas, new ways of thinking, and new ways of interacting to create innovative learning solutions.” It [describes its science curriculum](#) as a “phenomena-based,” “immersing students in the inquiry process. This is science elevated for problem solving, critical thinking, and the NGSS performance expectations.”

19 teachers provided their professional opinions on the EL Curriculum. Important findings include:

- 33% disagreed that they are able to modify or supplement the curriculum to best meet the needs of their students.
- 33% do not agree that the curriculum is rigorous enough to consistently challenge their students.
- 22% disagree that the curriculum allows them the flexibility to teach lessons in a way that best utilizes their strengths as a teacher.
- 41% do not agree that the curriculum is an improvement over what they used previously.
- 33% do not agree that the curriculum allows them to select what texts, projects, and assignments they think are best for their students.
- 28% disagree that they expect to see significant growth and achievement from their students as a result of this curriculum.
- 39% disagree that they are given ample personal planning time to implement this curriculum.
- 39% agree that they are excited about this curriculum.

In their comments, teachers identified professional concerns about the curriculum, including:

- The materials are cheap.

- Kids need a book.
- It is not engaging for students.
- It is not clear what the official curriculum is.
- It is not rigorous enough.
- It increases daily screen time.
- It is a “one size fits all” program, but one size does not fit all.
- Young children should not be learning science topics through workbooks.

Recommendations: The CTA recommends that CCSD continue allowing teachers the flexibility to modify or supplement the curriculum to best meet the needs of their students; to select the texts, projects, and assignments they think are best for their students; and to teach lessons in a way that best utilizes their strengths.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our analysis of teacher perspectives over the last three years, the CTA makes four recommendations about the adoption of new curricula:

1. Avoid highly scripted curricula that preclude teachers’ ability to adapt them to the needs of their students.
2. Properly evaluate new curricula by regularly surveying the teachers who are implementing them.
3. Allow schools the autonomy to adopt any state-approved curricula that suit the needs of their students.
4. Give new curricula time to work before replacing them.