

A Curriculum-Quality Checklist

Decade after decade of basically flat academic performance indicates an unaddressed system problem—the traditional math, science, language arts, and social studies “core” curriculum adopted in 1893.

An acceptable curriculum:

1. Stimulates creativity, initiative, imagination, curiosity
2. “Covers the material” at a rate set by learners
3. Makes much use of real-world, “hands on” experience
4. Routinely requires the use of a full range of thought processes
5. Is open to new fields of study as they appear
6. Addresses moral, ethical and other values issues
7. Capitalizes on the connections among school subjects
8. Exploits the richness of individual differences
9. Yields learner performance too complex to evaluate objectively
10. Respects the seamless way the brain perceives reality
11. Has built-in mechanisms forcing it to adapt to change
12. Is free of cultural, social class and ideological bias
13. Is seen by learners as immediately useful and relevant
14. Acknowledges learner need for a degree of autonomy
15. Does not privilege reading and listening over other ways of learning
16. Displays the holistic, systemically integrated nature of reality
17. Over time, builds steadily in conceptual complexity
18. Motivates without the use of grades or other extrinsic devices
19. Capitalizes on the recent switch from hard-to-access to easy-to-access information
20. Is implemented in ways that respect research on retention in grade, class size, length of school day, homework, and other issues.

There will be no significant improvement in learner performance until these problems have been satisfactorily addressed.

Marion Brady’s homepage: <http://www.marionbrady.com/>