



Frequently Asked Questions about FWCS Curriculum

This year, Fort Wayne Community Schools began using a new curriculum to increase the rigor of what students are learning and prepare students with the skills needed to be successful in life. These skills, known as the 6 Cs of global competency are: character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking.

WHY DID THE CURRICULUM NEED TO CHANGE?

Traditional education has not focused on these competencies and instead focuses on specific skills learned for a specific job. That is no longer the world in which we live; nor is it the world our students will enter. We must prepare students to be adaptable with skills that are transferrable regardless of their career.

Last fall, we completed several focus groups of community leaders, parents and students. What we heard over and over, particularly from business owners, is that students need to graduate with the ability to think critically and problem solve.

As a school corporation in Indiana, we are also required to ensure students are meeting the state's academic standards and graduation requirements. As we reviewed our past academic accomplishments, we determined we must do better to ensure all students are educated to high standards. We have the highest quality educators, but we needed to shift how teachers teach in order for students to be challenged with a rigorous curriculum and be able to demonstrate the 6 Cs.

WHY DID THE CHANGES SEEM TO HAPPEN SO FAST?

We had an aggressive timeline beginning with the FWCS Leadership Team laying the foundation in the spring. Teachers wrote the curriculum for math and language arts in the summer, and we began using the new curriculum the first day of school. We had to be aggressive because our students need us to give them the best we have. They don't have time to lose.

This year, we focused on elementary language arts, middle school math and high school math and language arts. We continue to receive feedback from teachers on the curriculum and are making adjustments, as needed. Next summer, we will focus on writing additional curriculum for elementary math, middle school language arts, science and social studies.

DID THE TEACHERS WRITE THE CURRICULUM OR WAS IT WRITTEN BY CONSULTANTS?

In July, 140 teachers worked over a period of three weeks to write the new curriculum. During this process, we relied on experts from the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin and CenterPoint Education Solutions to guide us in best practices. Dana Center focused on ensuring we met the state's math standards, and CenterPoint focused on language arts. These experts did not write our curriculum, but they did show us the way to design curriculum to meet the needs of our students.

ARE TEACHERS REQUIRED TO READ A SCRIPT UNDER THE NEW CURRICULUM?

No. Because this curriculum shifts how teachers teach, guidance is given in how to present lessons. However, teachers are NOT required to read a script.

DO TEACHERS HAVE ANY FLEXIBILITY IN WHAT THEY TEACH OR HOW THEY TEACH?

The basic curriculum (scope and sequence, units and lessons) is non-negotiable. Teachers must use the FWCS curriculum and cover the designated standards. However, there are numerous approved supplemental materials and programs that teachers can use to provide additional support or to extend learning for students. By using the approved materials and programs, we can be sure the tools students are using are aligned with the FWCS curriculum. By providing these resources up front, teachers no longer have to search for resources to support their students. Instead, they can focus on the individual needs of students in their classroom. Teachers are expected to use their professional judgement to determine if they need to slow down on a particular unit or speed up.

I HEARD STUDENTS ARE NO LONGER READING FULL NOVELS. IS THAT TRUE?

The curriculum is designed to meet the Indiana Academic Standards, which we are required to teach. Novels were not written with these standards in mind, but portions of novels can be used to teach specific standards. With that in mind, our curriculum uses what we call “anchor texts,” which must be used to teach the designated standards. Beyond the anchor texts, teachers should use their professional judgement to determine if he/she want to use additional texts to teach the standards or even read an entire book, based on the needs of his/her students.

WHY ARE ALL EIGHTH-GRADERS NOW TAKING ALGEBRA? AND WHY DID YOU CHANGE THE ORDER OF MATH CLASSES?

We are increasing the rigor of math instruction for all students. This is critical as we prepare students for future careers and in developing the 6 Cs. As we increase the math expectations, we also built in more time in middle schools for additional math instruction.

The math sequence for secondary students is now Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry. Math educators now see more benefit in teaching Algebra I and Algebra II back-to-back, rather than splitting up the courses with Geometry. This also ensures students will take Geometry closer to the time they are taking the SAT or ACT, which is commonly tested subject on the college placement exams.

WHAT IS AGILE MIND?

Agile Mind is an online tool we are using to supplement our math curriculum in middle and high school. It is not the math curriculum nor is it the sole resource for math instruction. At the elementary level, students are using an online tool called DreamBox.