

Finally, an important curriculum maintenance function is to try to keep abreast of existing research in the district and beyond (see Figure 1.3) Knowledge of current research will help the curriculum leader make instructional materials decisions, help identify new ways of doing things, and help answer instructional questions from faculty and parents in an authoritative way.

Together, these maintenance tasks keep the school curriculum rolling along and out of trouble. Obviously, the completion of such tasks will make the school curriculum more efficient and a great deal more effective. But the premise of such a maintenance orientation in curriculum leadership is that schools just don't change much year to year. I believe that in today's schools, maintenance will never be enough. A more dynamic role is required for successful school curriculum leadership.

DYNAMIC CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP

All schools are not equal in their ability to promote desired improvements. Although I recognize that basic curriculum maintenance is vital, I feel that curriculum leadership must try to do more than manage the status quo. If there is some kind of balance between maintaining the curriculum and upgrading school programs, the curriculum leader must always seek a greater and more visionary kind of role. The fact is, our world is not static and the curriculum in school represents our nation's program for preparing students to live in the future.

Although 90 percent of all schools use some form of ability grouping, research does not support this practice. The common argument for ability grouping is that it allows students to progress at a pace appropriate to their level of skill. Arguments against ability grouping include the self-fulfilling prophecy, teacher biases, segregation of ethnic or socioeconomic groups, and the stigmatizing effect on students. Conclusion: Too many negatives are attached to this practice and outweigh any gains.

Alternatives to static grouping would include (a) multiple placement criteria, (b) cooperative learning, (c) mastery learning models, and (d) greater use of computer-assisted instruction.

Best References

- Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Slavin, R. (1990). Achievement effects of ability grouping in secondary schools: A best evidence synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 60, 471–499.
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Figure 1.3 Summarizing research for faculty (example: ability grouping)