

Points to Consider when Selecting a Curriculum

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*Here are some suggestions to consider
when selecting a curriculum you think
will be helpful in your community . . .*



1. Check for the *publishing date* in the front. Materials that have been developed recently or updated on a regular basis are preferable.
2. *Research-based* curriculums are preferable. They're based on quantifiable research rather than on opinion, philosophy, or intuition. Curriculums should provide a reference list in the back.
 - a. The sources included in the reference list should be derived from journal articles and relevant books published in the field. Here are some examples:

Child/adolescent development journals include: Child Development, Developmental Psychology, the Journal of Adolescent Research, and The Journal of Adolescence, etc.

Family journals include: Journal of Marriage and Family, Family Relations, etc.

Family economics journals include: Financial Counseling and Planning, and the Journal of Consumer Affairs, etc.

Nutrition and health area journals include: American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Journal of Nutrition, Journal of the American Dietetics Association, Nutrition Reviews, etc.

- b. If the reference list includes some of these journal names — check for the *dates*. Ideally, curriculums should be based on *recent* research. This is especially relevant in our fields where new knowledge is gained constantly.
 - c. Be cautious if the reference page lists only other curriculums; especially when they're unfamiliar. This does not mean that the curriculum is not research-based or is less appropriate. It just means it's harder to find out what research it's based on and when it was published.
 - d. Family economics references and government sources of economic data are usually reliable.



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3. Is the material *unbiased*? Does someone stand to gain financially by the information in the curriculum? Some materials produced by companies can be very good, but you need to watch out for misinformation and bias that may promote the products of the sponsor.
4. Are the ideas promoted in the curriculum informed by any *theoretical background* or theoretical orientation? Theories that contribute to our understanding of the topic can be important in how a curriculum is shaped.
5. Identify the *teaching strategies and tools* that are provided in the curriculum materials. Any good curriculum will contain a variety of teaching approaches to facilitate learning. Try to assess whether there is a sufficient number of teaching suggestions and a variety of tools to promote the concepts being shared.
6. Check whether any *evaluation tools* or materials are included as part of the curriculum package. Such tools can make it easier for you to assess the program in your own setting, and let you know how the program is working for you.
7. Find out if the curriculum has been *evaluated* for effectiveness. If it has, have the results been published, and who did the evaluations? Again, many research-based curriculums have not been evaluated yet, but are helpful.
8. If you find a curriculum that you think is relevant to your community, you always can contact the extension specialist knowledgeable in a particular area (*see box at right*).

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