



Necessary Conditions for Adopting the Great First Eight Curriculum

Thank you for your interest in Great First Eight!

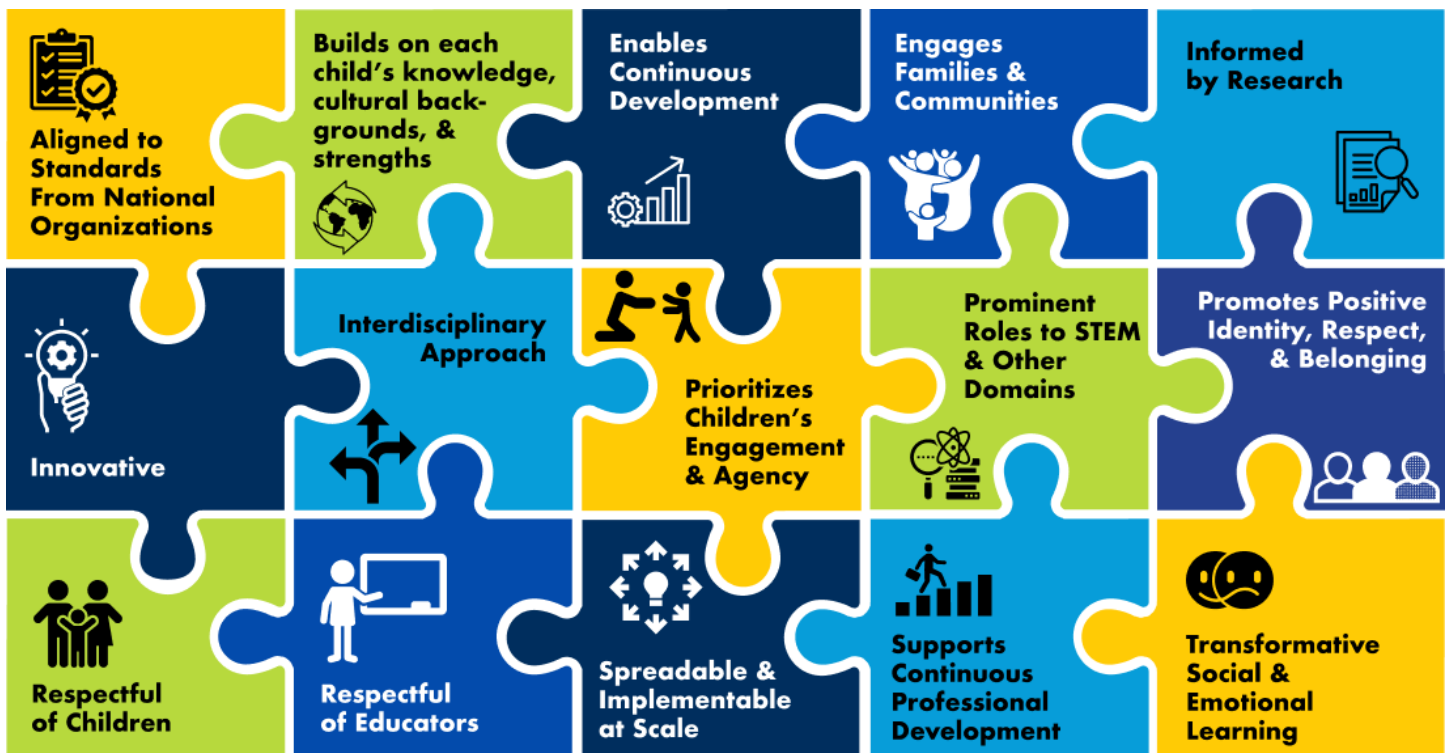
As you consider adopting the groundbreaking Great First Eight Curriculum, we want you to be clear about what is required. You need to:

1. Serve classrooms, in metropolitan areas, with a number of children from historically under-represented racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Many curricula pay little or no attention to children from these backgrounds. Our curriculum includes positive representations of people from these backgrounds as well as of people from racial and ethnic backgrounds that are not historically underrepresented. If your school, district, or network does not have a number of children from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds, Great First Eight is not the right curriculum for you.

2. Align with Great First Eight's design principles.

The principles influenced every aspect of the design of the curriculum, so those implementing the curriculum must be aligned with these principles as well. For example, you need to believe that girls can excel in math and science, that Black and Brown children can thrive with intellectually rigorous curricula, and that all families, regardless of their socioeconomic context, have abilities to support their children's learning. This graphic includes Great First Eight design principles:



3. Begin using the curriculum by or before kindergarten. The first- and second-grade portions of the curriculum require most of the children in the class to have developed the knowledge and skills taught in Great First Eight Kindergarten. As such, the Great First Eight first- or second-grade portions of the curriculum are only for schools in which the curriculum was used in kindergarten.

4. Use the curriculum exclusively and in its entirety within an age/grade level. Great First Eight is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, all-day and all-year curriculum. **Schools that adopt Great First Eight do not use other curricula, programs, or routines.** Here are a few reasons why:

- Using the materials from only one part of the day will cause children to miss important content on that same subject integrated elsewhere in the day.
- Using supplemental curricula with the intent of raising achievement in one area will come at the expense of another area or even potentially contradict how Great First Eight works to help children learn and grow.
- Using a “behavior management” approach that involves using tokens and prizes to reward good behavior undermines the Great First Eight approach, which teaches children to behave in ways that benefit both themselves and their community without tokens or prizes for doing so.
- Great First Eight’s wonderful decodable texts, called Wonder Books, only work well if you are using Great First Eight’s phonics scope and sequence and the children have developed the science and other content knowledge featured in the curriculum.

The bottom line is this: **reaping Great First Eight’s tremendous rewards requires going all in.**

5. Provide all the necessary materials and technology. There are a host of materials required for effective implementation of Great First Eight, including a large number of children’s books. We are working hard to secure an agreement with a compiler that will fulfill materials orders. We will have information soon on that and on classroom materials costs. In addition to required materials, there are technology requirements for Grades K and above, including:

- tablets or touch-screen laptops, styluses, and headphones for every child in K - 2
- apps specified in the Materials Lists
- reliable high-speed internet access in schools
- large-screen tablets or computers for teachers to access the online curriculum in their classrooms
- a computer projector or smart board in preschool through second grade classrooms.

Materials Lists and a full list of technology requirements are located in Great Gate, which can be accessed by creating a free account and logging in.

6. Engage in all of the professional learning required for the curriculum. Implementing the Great First Eight curriculum well requires extensive and ongoing professional learning.

Depending on the age/grade level, Great First Eight requires 24 to 30 hours of foundational professional learning—with colleagues, if at all possible—before implementing the first day of the curriculum and 12 to 18 additional hours of professional learning throughout the first year of implementation.

Great First Eight provides the required professional learning modules at no cost. The professional learning materials come with facilitator guides so that someone(s) at your site, such as a coach (ideally) or teacher leader, can lead the professional learning. In addition, we provide a number of other valuable professional learning materials that schools and childcare settings can choose among based on their particular needs and goals.

Teachers implementing Great First Eight at any age/grade level should have at least WEEKLY time set aside to engage with colleagues in professional learning and planning. In addition, teachers should have DAILY time to plan individually or with colleagues. The Great First Eight team feels strongly that teachers should be paid for time spent in professional learning and planning. So, depending on how your school or care setting is set up, this may be an additional expense associated with implementing the Great First Eight Curriculum.

7. Ensure all key stakeholders are on board.

Everyone—leaders, coaches, interventionists, specials teachers, playground and lunchroom supervisors, and others—need to be aligned for Great First Eight implementation to go well. Here are a few examples of why broad staff alignment is essential:

- If a principal or assistant principal believes the hallmark of a good classroom is children sitting quietly at their desks to complete worksheets, their guidance and feedback to teachers is likely to undermine Great First Eight implementation.
- If an interventionist teaches reading in a manner not aligned with scientific research on reading, children in Great First Eight classrooms will likely receive mixed messages about how to read and spell words.
- If a childcare center director values children staying clean at all times, there are important sensory experiences involved in Great First Eight that are likely to be missed.

Also essential is collaboration with families, the most important stakeholders of all. Great First Eight has extensive materials for engaging families—both for them to learn from Great First Eight and for educators to learn from families by incorporating families' expertise and goals for their children. For example, families are often invited to share information and stories with children that related to projects in each curricular unit.

- ## 8. Align assessments, teacher evaluations, and other components of the system.
- Great First Eight is likely to involve replacing many of your currently used assessments with assessments we provide that are aligned with the curriculum and with research. Using assessments misaligned with Great First Eight is one of the biggest threats to its successful implementation. For example, consider an assessment that tests phonics patterns that have yet to be taught and does not assess the patterns that have been taught. This assessment will provide

erroneous information about where children are in their phonics development. It may even incentivize teachers to stray from Great First Eight's phonics scope and sequence, which is carefully aligned with research. The same is true in the infant and toddler years, when using an assessment system designed for a different curriculum would be confusing for both teachers and families and would not allow teachers, families, or administrators to see children's growth and learning accurately.

As another example, Great First Eight does not support teachers posting on the board and announcing to young children which Common Core or other standard is being addressed in a lesson, as there is no research evidence to support this practice. We provide other ways of guiding and motivating children's learning that are research-aligned. Schools adopting Great First Eight therefore need to align with those research-aligned methods, not rate teachers based on practices such as posting and announcing standards.

We provide a number of tools to support assessment, evaluation, and other system alignment in the Cross-Unit Resources section of each age/grade level in the login-accessed portion of Great First Eight (i.e., Great Gate) and welcome requests for additional tools to support successful implementation.

- ## 9. Commit for at least three years.
- Effective adoption of any new curriculum generally takes time. This is particularly true for Great First Eight, which is full-day, interdisciplinary, and different in many ways from typical curricula, which have poorly served students from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as their teachers, families, and communities. When considering whether to adopt Great First Eight, we urge you to move forward only if you can make at least a three-year commitment.

For more information about the groundbreaking Great First Eight Curriculum, please contact us at greatfirsteight@stand.org.