Commonlit is a great program, but I have concerns about using it as a primary curriculum.

Pros

- Free Access: No cost for schools or students.
- Standards-Aligned: Matches Common Core and state standards.
- Diverse Content: Wide range of genres and reading levels.
- Built-In Assessments: Includes quizzes and tests.
- Digital Tools: Features like annotation and translation.
- Data and Reporting: Tracks student progress.
- Flexibility: Works for whole class, groups, or independent reading.

Cons

- Limited Depth: Some units lack depth or strong connections.
- Less Writing: Focuses more on reading than writing.
- Technology Needed: Requires internet and devices.
- Student Engagement: Some students may find digital reading less engaging.
- Limited Customization: Fewer options to change or create lessons.
- Potential Gaps: May not cover all state or district requirements.

There is no doubt that CommonLit is a robust digital platform. Its extensive, standards-aligned library, differentiation tools, and accessible design significantly support teachers and students. CommonLit's data-driven features also empower educators to make informed instructional decisions and address individual learning needs. For new teachers, in particular, the platform offers valuable structure and guidance.

However, I have some reservations about adopting CommonLit as a primary curriculum. Because it is entirely online, there is a risk of students experiencing screen fatigue and disengagement, especially if the platform is used exclusively or too frequently. Feedback from students and teachers suggests that the digital format and repetitive assignment structure can become tedious over time, potentially diminishing student motivation and deeper learning.

I have found CommonLit to be most effective as a supplemental resource, paired thoughtfully with a comprehensive printed curriculum. This blended approach would allow teachers to leverage the strengths of both digital and print materials—fostering engagement, supporting varied instructional strategies, and providing flexibility to meet diverse classroom needs. Such a model also promotes professional growth, giving teachers—especially those early in their careers—a strong foundation while encouraging creativity and instructional autonomy.

If you are considering Study Sync, I would also recommend acquiring the printed versions. Research consistently finds that while all digital curricula offer flexibility and accessibility, paper-based materials provide clear advantages for comprehension, retention, and sustained engagement—especially for deep, focused learning. The most effective approach is often a hybrid model, leveraging the strengths of both formats to support diverse learners and maximize educational outcomes.

Thank you for considering this perspective as you weigh curriculum options for your school community.

Sincerely,
Lisa Nelson
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The Case for Supplementing Digital Curriculum with Printed Materials

Peer-reviewed research and major education publications consistently indicate that while digital curriculum resources offer flexibility and accessibility, they are best used as a supplement to printed materials rather than a replacement. Systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses have found that students generally comprehend and retain information better when reading from paper, especially with expository texts and tasks requiring deep understanding and memory recall. Print-based learning is associated with higher assessment scores, better identification of main ideas, and greater ability to draw inferences, while digital reading can lead to more superficial processing and increased distractions. Studies also highlight that excessive screen use can contribute to screen fatigue and reduced engagement, particularly for younger learners. While some recent research notes that digital reading can be compelling—especially for students with high comprehension skills or in well-designed online environments—the consensus remains that a blended approach, using digital tools to supplement robust print curricula, produces the strongest educational outcomes. This hybrid model leverages the depth and focus of print with the adaptability and convenience of digital resources, supporting diverse learning needs and maximizing student success.

Works Cited

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