

The Spiral Curriculum

Education

Returning to the same big ideas at rising difficulty, never just once.

Bruner's proposal that a subject should be revisited repeatedly, each return adding depth and formality to an idea the learner already holds in a simpler form.

- Each return builds on the earlier version, not beside it.
- Revisiting doubles as spaced practice.
- It requires the earlier version to be correct, not merely simple.
- Bad simplifications must later be unlearned.
- Coverage once and never again is the alternative it rejects.
- The spiral is a plan, not a repetition of the same lesson.

LOOK FOR IT

Particles: a simple ball model in year 7, arrangement and energy in year 9, kinetic theory and forces between particles at 16.

The risk is a spiral that circles without rising. Each return has to demand something the earlier one did not.