

**CURRICULUM
DEVELOPMENT AND THE
ROLE OF THE TEACHER**

Goals:

The goals of this project were:

1. To specify the role of the church, board, administration, and teachers in a Christian school in the curriculum development process.
2. To provide a transferable framework to serve as a guide for Christian schools in determining the responsibilities of each group in the curriculum development process.
3. To elaborate on the teacher's role in curriculum development.
4. To demonstrate that the investment and involvement of teachers in the curriculum development and change process including both accreditation and student learning outcomes assessment provides motivation for teachers to change and develop.

Summary:

The content we choose to teach is a crucially important key to the training of future Kingdom leaders and is often overlooked or fails to be intentionally and strategically developed. The focus of this project was to provide a framework for developing a mission based curriculum. The project addressed the question of "what we want our students to know," or the "learning outcomes" of each course in the curriculum, especially how the learning outcomes reflected and advanced the Board adopted mission. The intent was to clearly define the roles of the school board, administration, and instructional faculty in curriculum development. In addition to defining the roles, this project also focused on the final element to verify that the students were indeed learning the curriculum. Communication with the board, administration, and faculty, regarding the curriculum was also addressed and defined.

Background:

Due to the size of this project, one year is insufficient to completely finalize details. This is a project that I have been engaged with for fifteen years and several schools. During this past year I have been able to begin the finalization of establishing a framework that allows the process to be strategic and relational, and to establish a process of an ongoing dialogue with the church (in the case of a church school), board, administration, and faculty about what our students need to learn to possess a truly Christ-centered worldview education. It has been my privilege to serve in both Church-run and Independent Christian Schools. While there are differences in these two types of schools regarding curriculum development the difference is only related to an added leadership segment that provides oversight. This project, therefore, is reflective of Christian schools in general rather than relating to a specific school. The results of this project will have a significant impact on a school desiring to design a mission-directed and delivered curriculum.

Process:

The process was strategic and involved consideration of several factors:

1. Resources (human, financial, and technological)
2. Identification of the steps needed in moving from the stated mission of the school to that mission being reflected in the learning outcomes achieved by the students
3. Identification of a common vocabulary in order for collaboration to be enhanced
4. Approval of the Board in establishing specific roles for each segment in the development and implementation of the curriculum development process
5. Time-line for research and implementation
6. Outline of actual curriculum development, including establishment of assessment tools identifying student achievement

Providing a matrix showing the differing role each segment of school leadership plays in the decision making process should assist in understanding that process. Below are two separate charts, one pertaining to a church-owned school and one pertaining to an independent school. The first column in both charts identifies the elements necessary for moving from the more global mission and philosophy of the school to the more specific learning outcomes of the student. The charts outline the various responsibilities for the initiation of each element, collaboration on the development of each element, and support for each element's actualization.

These charts may serve as a quality control tool to aid in determining to what degree that the mission of the school is being reflected in the students. The charts also provide a teacher with clear direction to know how he fits into the process of curriculum development.

In the case of a **CHURCH** school the following chart represents the role each segment of the school played in the decision making process:

CURRICULUM GUIDE DEVELOPMENT	CHURCH LEADERSHIP	SCHOOL BOARD	ADMINISTRATION	FACULTY
MISSION OF THE CHURCH	I	C	S	S
PHILOSOPHY OF THE SCHOOL	I	C	S	S
MISSION OF THE SCHOOL	C	I	S	S
PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL	S	I	C	S
GOALS OF THE SCHOOL	S	C	I	S
OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL	S	C	I	S
INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS - Why we teach this subject	S	S	I	C
INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES - Why we teach this subject at this grade level	S	S	I	C
SCOPE AND SEQUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS	S	S	I	C
TIME ALLOTMENT OF SUBJECTS	S	S	I	C
UNITS OF INSTRUCTION - Grouping of Learning Outcomes	S	S	C	I
LESSON PLANS - Instructional Delivery of Learning Outcomes	S	S	C	I
TEXTBOOK SELECTION	S	S	C	I
STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES	S	S	C	I
KEY:				
I = Initiate				
C = Collaborate				
S = Support				
The Church through the School Board provides OVERSIGHT and is ultimately responsible for all decisions.				

In the case of an **INDEPENDENT** school:

CURRICULUM GUIDE DEVELOPMENT	SCHOOL BOARD	ADMINISTRATION	FACULTY
PHILOSOPHY OF THE SCHOOL	I	C	S
MISSION OF THE SCHOOL	I	C	S
PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL	I	C	S
GOALS OF THE SCHOOL	C	I	S
OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL	C	I	S
INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS - Why we teach this subject	S	I	C
INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES - Why we teach this subject at this grade level	S	I	C
SCOPE AND SEQUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS	S	I	C
TIME ALLOTMENT OF SUBJECTS	S	I	C
UNITS OF INSTRUCTION - Grouping of Learning Outcomes	S	C	I
LESSON PLANS - Instructional Delivery of Learning Outcomes	S	C	I
TEXTBOOK SELECTION	S	C	I
STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES	S	C	I
KEY:			
I = Initiate			
C = Collaborate			
S = Support			
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The time period suggested for the teachers to work from the Instructional Goals through to the Student Assessment of the Learning Outcomes is five years. Supporting documentation that goes into further

detail regarding the involvement and ownership of the teachers in this process is available (contact information is available at the conclusion of this paper).

Results:

As a result of this project, clarity of role and a process of identifying the connection between student learning outcomes and the mission of the school can now be documented and shared with all constituencies of the school.

Analysis:

Teachers are the “living curriculum”. Several years ago, Christian school administrator Dr. Gene Frost at Wheaton Academy began to develop this biblical principle found in II Corinthians 3:2 in which Paul tells the believers to whom he is writing “you yourselves are our letter written not within but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.” A teacher knows that the student must change in some qualitative way from the first day of class to the last day. Involving the teacher in the change process (curriculum development) places that teacher in a position to think intentionally and with greater direction toward producing change in the student. Thus the teacher is provided with specific direction, direction that reflects and is driven by the school’s mission.

The teacher must know the students and engage them to lead them. The teacher must adapt, adjust and change with each cohort of students to maximize the impact on the lives of the students. The investment and involvement of a teacher in the curriculum development and change process helps that teacher to change and develop.

The teacher’s expectation drives student learning. The interaction of the teacher with the curriculum materials determines what takes place in the classroom. Since we know people (teachers are people) do not naturally embrace change, the curriculum material could be transformed into a stagnant expression of the school’s mission in the classroom, where the teacher fails to understand the eternal importance of the life in which he or she is investing. A teacher who is involved in the curriculum selection process and responsible for the curriculum materials will naturally embrace ownership. This opportunity for growth and development for the teacher should result in change and development observable in the student.

Curriculum development is a dynamic process that is in a constant state of change. The character of curriculum materials is “neutral”. Curriculum materials themselves do not generate changes in the classroom or result in the mission of the school being reflected by the life of the student. They are a tool used by the teacher to shape students minds and behavior. “The behavior and beliefs of the teacher are a critical factor in how the curriculum is put into action” (Fullan, 1991). The teacher will teach what he knows and will live what he believes. The tools, when applied effectively, have become part of the teacher. “A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.” Luke 6:40 [New American Standard Bible \(©1995\)](#)

Thus, it is important that each teacher is fully part of the decision making process during the selection of curriculum materials and methods of lesson delivery. Ownership in these areas allows for the teacher to maximize his focus on the preferred outcome of student learning. When the teacher knows with certainty that there are identifiable outcomes expected during a prescribed time frame, this expectation provides direction and motivation leading to change. When the teacher knows with clarity the goal of change he can focus more on being an agent of change.

Each teacher must know that the learning outcomes are of great value since they represent evidence of change that is actually taking place. The ability to document change provides both the student and the

teacher proper motivation to celebrate and to continue to pursue future change. Satisfaction in teaching comes when the teacher knows that the student “got it” and then “uses that knowledge appropriately”. Knowing that these learning outcomes are important to the community provides further motivation for the teacher to embrace change and grow professionally. The manner in which this curriculum work is acknowledged affects the teacher’s understanding of its importance. One way to acknowledge a teacher’s work in curriculum development is to compensate him for his work in this area above and beyond his compensation as a teacher.

The investment and involvement of each teacher in the accreditation and outcomes assessment process helps him to change and develop. The accreditation process is a way that the teacher can investigate, identify and document the processes and results of change. Being able to demonstrate to a larger community what change is actually taking place provides the teacher with documented evidence. The accreditation process requires that this evidence be analyzed. While curriculum development is central in the accreditation process, accreditation itself includes many other metrics. A teacher must understand that the goal of the accreditation process is to provide a platform for growth. Knowing the goal and being able to analyze progress toward that goal requires the teacher to continue to grow and change. During the accreditation process, care must be given to encourage the teacher to change rather than to become fearful of being accused of poor performance. This fearfulness and a sense that the accreditation process somehow is unrelated to a teacher’s day to day teaching are two of the reasons that accreditation is seen as “evil”. It is necessary for the teacher to develop an understanding of the importance of curriculum development apart from the necessary “evil” of accreditation. Accreditation provides a very beneficial opportunity for the curriculum development process to be verified or recalibrated for greater effectiveness. Outcomes assessment is that part of the curriculum development that provides the documentation to demonstrate that student change is taking place. Teacher growth and change takes place when the teacher interacts with the results of student assessment.

Each segment of leadership must own and become vigilant of its part in seeing that the mission of the school is translated into the lives of the students.

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