



Curriculum Mapping

WHAT DID I DO?

All curricula from kindergarten through eighth grade were mapped from August through May by subject.

WHY WAS IT NEEDED? A SHORT HISTORY WILL EXPLAIN...

East Cobb Christian School is a covenant school founded in 1988 by a group of parents in East Cobb Presbyterian Church. The church originally was part of Perimeter Church, and the school was an offshoot of Perimeter's School. The home school movement was just beginning. The initial design of the school was influenced by Raymond and Dorothy Moore, James Dobson, Frances Schaeffer, and Jay Adams.

The covenant relationship with our parents is based on Deuteronomy 6: 6-7. "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." Parents are commanded to be the primary educators of their children. While this scripture refers to "spiritual things," we believe all of life is spiritual.

The school started with a small first grade class who attended school from nine to noon daily. The class size was limited to eight. The teacher taught Math, Language Arts and Bible Monday through Thursday. Parents planned and taught "Enrichment Days" on Fridays. Enrichment Days are "hands-on" social studies and science lessons planned and taught by parents. Second grade follows the same model.

Initially, there was no kindergarten, because our philosophy is children are better off being influenced and trained at home to form their character. However, members of the church chose to send their children to kindergarten at other Christian schools. Because we are a ministry of the church, kindergarten was added because members wanted it. It began as a three day a week program, then to a four day program, and now is five half days a week. The school adapted to meet the "needs" of the congregation and the community. Third grade was added the same year. The third grade students attend half-day on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and they attend full days on Tuesday and Thursday..

While our daily schedule is still the same, parents with children in kindergarten through third grade have the option of an extended day Monday through Thursday. While our philosophy is younger children should be spending the time at home with their mother, the reality was that parents with younger and older children were coming to school three times a day. Our area became more populated and the traffic became more challenging. In the beginning there was a



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horse farm across the two lane highway. Today there is a huge subdivision and several shopping centers across the street and a four lane highway. The philosophy stressed out our moms and the younger children were living in the car.

The extended day program is called ExploreMore. ExploreMore has a four year program rotation. The program is designed to include the Charlotte Mason activities that in a perfect world, our moms would do at home. However, more mothers choose to or have to work.

In the ExploreMore program, a good amount of time is spent outdoors doing formal nature study, free play, and gardening. Inside, students do picture studies of the works of great artist and listen to music of composers. Classic literature is read aloud to the students. Sometimes classic radio shows are played to help develop the habit of listening. Cooking is also done occasionally.

Originally, our plan was to have just an elementary school. Each year another grade was added. Four and fifth grade were combined for several years. A middle school began in 1994 with six students.

The scope and sequence was not really planned, it just evolved. Due to the small size of middle school, six through eighth graders were combined for social studies, language arts, and science. Courses were taught on a three year rotation. The three year rotation is still the practice, but the grade levels are separated. This gives the teacher one prep for three classes. Our science classes have excellent weekly labs; the one prep makes this possible.

As a result of the morphing philosophy, the process of adding grades, and rotating classes in middle school on a three year cycle, a hard look needed to be taken of our curriculum. A few years ago, the curriculum guide was revised. However, the current middle school social studies teacher had not taught all three years. She has now developed and documented the three years. This is a drawback for the design. Teachers only teach the course once every three years.

Two other Perimeter Church plants started schools and one independent Christian school was started around the same time. The schools formed the Perimeter School Association. Faculty training in the philosophy was done as a group.

Susan Schaeffer Macauley's book, *For the Children's Sake*, influenced the philosophy of the association. She spoke at the association's teacher conference. Her philosophy solidified the initial philosophy of the school and gave it more substance. The back flap of her book states "*For the Children's Sake* is a book about what education can be—for your child, in your home,



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and in your school. It is based first on a Christian understanding of what it means to be human—to be a child, a parent, a teacher—and on the Christian meaning of life.”

Charlotte Mason’s teachings impacted our school’s culture. We were more purposeful on developing good habits in our students. Students are taught to narrate what has been read to them. Each class has artists and composers to study. Each student begins a “Book of Centuries” and a nature journal in kindergarten and adds to it until they leave or graduate. Truly our school is a place where children love to learn.

The Perimeter School Association changed its name to the ChildLight Schools Association because Perimeter church and school plants became independent schools and churches. Today, there are twelve schools in the southeastern United States and one in Nicaragua that embrace the philosophy of Charlotte Mason. We support and encourage each other by having an annual administrators retreat and an annual faculty training conference.

WHAT DID I LEARN

In some ways, I learned what not to do.

My original intent of this project is exactly what was done. However, after meeting Dan Beeran at the RenWeb Conference, I was intrigued by the product CurriculumTrak. After purchasing it, I didn’t do a good job of preparing my faculty for it.

Our curriculum guide includes objectives to be met, but we have never aligned our curriculum to an organization’s standards. Our state’s standards (before Common Core was adopted) were used to help write our objectives.

There was a lot of pressure to choose standards for CurriculumTrak and that pressure paralyzed me. Nothing really fit us. When I mentioned looking at Common Core, my K-2 grade teachers, half who are former public school teachers panicked and freaked out. To them it was a waste of time that would take away from their teaching with busy work. They also felt I was changing the philosophy of the school. They wrote a letter to my School Ministry Team (my board) expressing their concern. My “Relator” personality was thrown into turmoil with relationships being off.

When Blue Thunder met in Arizona, and I was working on my video, I realized my faculty was right to be concerned. The standards don’t match our philosophy. The way they handled it was wrong, but I have to believe fear got a hold on them.



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I realized a lot about myself as a leader during this time. I have to process situations. If there is intense emotion directed at me, it shuts me down. I believe I'm able to stop a meeting and reschedule when emotions have calmed down.

When our administrators meet next January, I plan to propose that as a group we write standards that align with our philosophy. This excites me!

Things I learned about our curriculum at first glance:

- Instruction in geography is weak.
- The Colonial Period is covered in first, second, and third grades. There are other areas of repetition.
- Our history and literature lacks teaching about different cultures.
- There is work to be done in writing. Our students are good at writing narrations. Further tracking of types of writing needs to be done at each grade level. A comprehensive writing plan should be developed.
- The sequence of middle school history needs to change.
- Math curriculum is a challenge. Kindergarten has developed its own program. First and second grades use Saxon Math. Grades third through fifth uses a Houghton Mifflin textbook that is out of print. Middle School uses a variety of textbooks to prepare students for high school. Math varies not just from county to county, but also from high school to high school in our county. We have students leaving us to go to high schools three different counties and four different Christian schools. The scope and sequence is different in all of them. We have to review and update our math curriculum.
- A strategic plan for reviewing each subject needs to be developed.

WHAT DIFFERENCE IS THIS MAKING IN OUR SCHOOL?

An immediate way this project benefits East Cobb Christian School is it lays out the year "in a glance" for new teachers. We have two classes each of first, second, and third grades. There is only one kindergarten, fourth and fifth grade class. There is only one teacher for each subject in middle school.



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When the economy tanked, we had to go down to one class per grade. We lost our one third grade teacher, and our newly hired teacher had a very difficult time laying out her school year. Her first year would have been so much less painful if she had this information.

This project makes it much easier to evaluate and change curriculum.

This was a huge undertaking for our faculty. I am so thankful and relieved to have this project done.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Curriculum Mapping
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Dan Beren consulted with me on a limited basis. It was impossible to track the entire school's curriculum using his product in one year. It would have overwhelmed the faculty. Instead we added a teacher workday and laid out each subject.



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Teresa R. Staley, Van Lunen Fellow 2014-2015
Principal of East Cobb Christian School

WHAT I DID:

All curricula of East Cobb Christian School were mapped by subject from August to May.

WHAT DID I LEARN?

There are a lot of revisions that need to be made especially in Math, History, and Geography. Our language arts and history curricula lack multiculturalism.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DID IT MAKE?

It is a beneficial project for many reasons:

- Curriculum for each subject is laid out monthly.
- This will help a new teacher know how to lay out lesson plans for the entire year.
- All faculty members will know what is being taught in all grades and when.
- It will help us revise our curricula by subject.
- It is easier to know what needs to be revised.
- I came to terms with issues in my leadership role.