

Reinventing Curriculum

VLF 15 Blue Thunder

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What is it that every school needs? Yes, there are many things that every school needs, but one of the most important is curriculum. Curriculum involves many things, from standards to pedagogy to textbooks. As anyone that has been in education more than ten minutes knows, there are a plethora of groups that are arguing over the state of education in the US. The biggest concerns are with standards, or, what is being taught in our schools, i.e. Common Core State Standards. As the standards of the public schools that surround each of our private religious schools continue to rise (even if it is only perceived), we are faced with other challenges as a result; namely, marketing and differentiating our schools.

So, as we look at the bigger picture, how do we provide an education that is recognizably superior to our public school counterparts, showcases the Christian aspect of our schools, and helps all of us escape from the textbook crutch? This is where I found myself as I explored the concept of curriculum at my school. The path to my answer was quite lengthy, and actually had more turns and twists than originally expected.

As we began to look at our curriculum, I saw that it was "borrowed" from another school, for the purposes of accreditation. To start, I began researching the differing standards. We were just going to concentrate on Social Studies for this year, get the process down, and then adapt it in future years to other curricular areas. This was frustrating to me, and to the teaching staff that I am blessed to serve with, because there are so many different sets of standards in existence, from state standards to standards written by recognized agencies not affiliated with state or federal education (i.e. UCLA, National Geography, etc...).

Finally, an epiphany in the form of a conversation about a potential new position with a colleague in California. He talked about being a Core Knowledge school. So, I Googled it! Wow! I introduced it to the staff and they loved it! Core Knowledge is a free, downloadable sequence that runs K-8th grade. This sequence has given our staff the basis that it has needed to make a new curriculum a reality. The old days of having grade level silos, and subject/department silos is over. Core Knowledge has six subject areas in it (Science, Math, Social Studies, L'Arts, Visual Arts, Music), and is both vertically and horizontally aligned across the sequence.

One thing to note- this is a sequence, not a curriculum. That is the step that we are on right now. Taking the sequence and making it into not just a curriculum, but our curriculum. Adding here and tweaking there. Adding in the biblical centeredness that is a part of the identity of our school, as well as tweaking the suggested bible readings.

We are really looking forward to the implementation of this new sequence and subsequent curriculum are very energizing. This experience is great for me as I see my teachers excited to work on making a sequence in to a curriculum with their fingerprints all over it. What a blessing!