

An Organizational Plan for Curriculum Development

Detailed here is a plan for systematic, continuing renewal of the curriculum, in all areas and through all levels, K-12, within a five year cycle.

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Maximizing the capacity of a school system to achieve its instructional goals is one of the major purposes of curriculum development. A second purpose is the establishment of new goals and a mechanism to accomplish them. A strategy that maintains and supports the existing system yet allows for innovation is difficult to implement. Also, a strategy that works for one school system may not work in another. Keeping these thoughts in mind, I wish to present an organizational plan for curriculum development¹ that consists of three basic components.

The *first* component is the division of the K-12 curriculum into content areas with the four main content areas being divided into three subdivisions. The content areas and their subdivisions, where applicable, are shown in Figure 1.

The *second* component is a five-year plan for each of these content areas. The purpose of the five-year plan is to distribute expenditures over a five-year period and to establish a schedule by which the curriculum of a content area is completely reviewed every five years. A five-year plan for the K-4 content areas could be as follows: 1975-76—Language Arts; 1976-77—English & Health; 1977-78—Science; 1978-79—Social Studies; and 1979-80—Math.

During these years, curriculum committees for those subject areas would rethink the basic philosophy and objectives for their subject(s) and would select new books and materials for adoption.

This procedure of studying one skill or content area every five years is extremely important, from the standpoint of continuity. For example, if a new reading system is adopted, it is impor-

tant in the primary grades that the same system be utilized the following years. Switching from one system to another, as, for example, from the phonics approach to the sight approach, can be harmful for some children. In the upper grades, more deviation can be tolerated. Consequently, teachers can adopt and study a greater variety of materials from different companies. In the primary grades, however, it is recommended that materials be purchased from the same company or from companies with a similar approach to a content or skill area. This can best be accomplished by purchasing all the basic materials for that area in one year.

The intervening years of the five-year plan for each content area will be spent (a) developing specific objectives to be accomplished at each level of a child's physical and mental development; (b) devising evaluative techniques to measure objectives; (c) evaluating and devising supplementary materials, games, and audiovisuals; and (d) reviewing the K-12 curriculum for that content area to check scope and sequence.

The five-year plans for the 5-8, 9-12, and other grade level combination in content areas differ from the K-4 five-year plan in the area of materials adoptions. Whereas the K-4 plan has a large purchase of materials for each subject area only once every five years, the 5-8 and 9-12 plans have approximately an equal expenditure (for that content area) of money every year. In order to accomplish this, each content area has a

¹The organizational plan presented was conceptualized for a school system with two-three central office administrators, at least four building principals, and about 3,000 students.

five-year plan. For example, math (5-8) might adopt materials in 1975-76 for the eighth grade; 1976-77 for the fifth grade; 1977-78 for the sixth grade; 1978-79 for the seventh grade; and 1979-80, a cushion year to restudy an area that is not satisfactory, to review supplementary materials, games, and audiovisuals.

The main idea behind the five-year plan at the 5-8 and 9-12 divisions of the curriculum is to equally divide the expenditures for materials for that segment of the curriculum over a five-year period. Also, this procedure allows a department to study some aspect of its curriculum every year. This has the advantage of keeping them up-to-date with new materials and keeps them geared to continual evaluation of their curriculum. At the 9-12 level, the content area divisions will take the form of courses being offered rather than grade level offerings as in the 5-8 math example above.

A five-year plan should be revised as staff, pupil, and community needs change. Deviation from a five-year plan should be not only permitted, but encouraged. It would be impossible in year one of a five-year plan to predict what would be needed in year five.

The *third* component necessary for successful curriculum development is the establishment of an organizational structure that provides for coordination between content areas and grade

Figure 1.

K-4	5-8
Social Studies	Social Studies
Math	Math
Language Arts	Language Arts
Science	Science
9-12	Other Grade Combinations—
Business Education	Physical Education K-12
English, Humanities, Speech, and Drama	Health 7-12
Foreign Languages	Industrial Arts 7-12
Mathematics	Home Economics 7-12
Science	Art K-12
Social Studies	Music K-12
Vocational Education	Special Education K-12
	Title I K-4

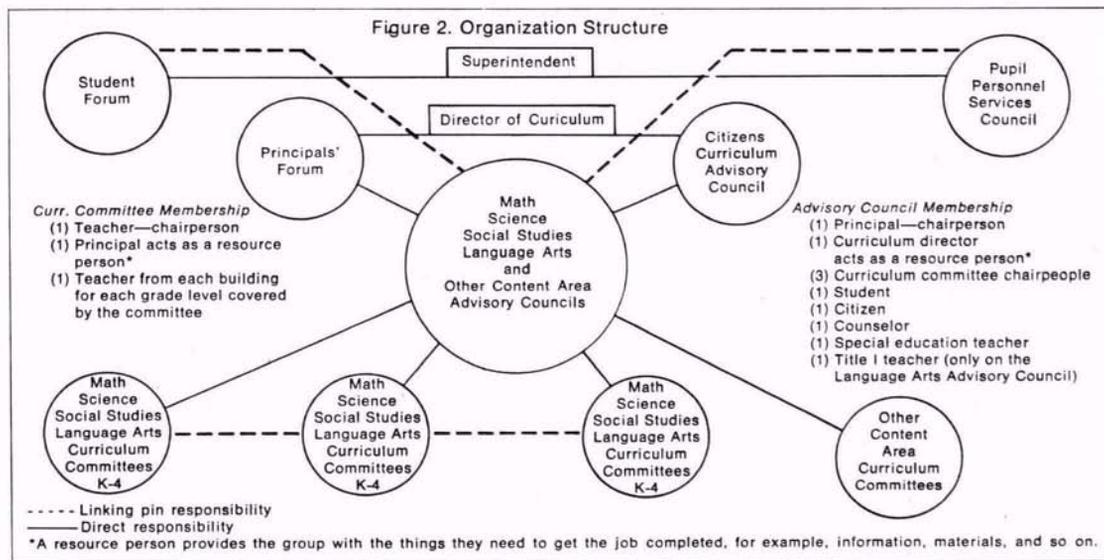
levels and that additionally assures the involvement of all those affected by the curriculum.

In many schools, the knowledge and skills of individuals and small groups seldom are communicated widely enough to be useful to all members. Yet without active articulation and coordination of a school's resources, (for example, responsive students, creative teachers, and supportive administrators), its powers will remain merely potential. Unless participants in all important roles can become involved, at least sometimes, in joint and collaboration decision-making, little sharing of resources will occur.²

The organizational structure illustrated by the schematic diagram in Figure 2 should provide for collaboration and joint decision making.

²R. A. Schmuck and P. J. Runkel, *et al. Handbook of Organizational Development*. University of Oregon: National Press Books, 1972. p. 255.

Figure 2. Organization Structure



Description of Schematic Diagram. The organizational structure consists of what can be called a "linking pin" or overlapping-group³ approach to facilitate communication between those groups involved in the curriculum development process. For example, the student group is represented by one member on each of the four main subject area curriculum committees. In a sense, they link the curriculum committee with their own group and are responsible for reporting curriculum developments. The same would be true for the citizens and the principals. The other content area curriculum committees may or may not have student, citizen, or principal representation. This will vary depending on the interest level of people outside of the content area. However, student, citizen, and administrative representation must be present in the four main content areas, that is, math, language arts, science, and social studies.

It is desirable to have student, citizen, and administrative representation in the remaining content areas, but the magnitude of coordinating the efforts of this many groups may make representation on all councils an impossibility. There would be 14 content area councils and 22 curriculum committees in operation during the school year. At a minimum, the administration should be represented on each of the other content area councils. If a principal is not involved, then the curriculum director will have to be involved. The involvement of someone in administration will ensure a "linking pin" between the students', citizens', and principals' groups.

The composition of each group varies depending on its function. The composition of each group and its function is as follows:

- *The Student Forum* meets monthly and reports directly to the superintendent for the purpose of informing the superintendent of how they see the educational setting from the eyes of a student. The focus is on the constructive criticism of the teachers, administration, and curriculum with the end goal of better meeting the needs of students. Comments pertaining to curriculum are then passed on to the curriculum director. Representatives to the student forum can be members of identifiable student groups or both. The superintendent is the "linking pin" in this group for the school administration.

- *The Pupil Personnel Services Council* meets bi-monthly and reports to the superintendent. This group serves the function of providing feedback to the administration on how the system is meeting the specialized needs of the students. For example, counselors may relate the curricular implications of certain problems that some students have in common. Test results can be analyzed and discussed. Membership on the council will comprise the superintendent, the curriculum director, counselors, speech and hearing therapists, the school psychologist, the EMR consultant, and the LD consultant, and soon.

- *The Citizens' Curriculum Advisory Council* meets bi-monthly or as needed, and reports to the curriculum director and serves the function of providing community feedback to the school system on the curriculum. Other than feedback gained through personal contact with other members of the community, they also can conduct surveys, make classroom visitations, and/or establish subcommittees to investigate an area of the curriculum that is of special interest to the council. Representatives on the committee are from various community organizations. They select a chairperson from their own group, conduct their own meetings, and draw up their own agendas. The curriculum director is the "linking pin" in this group for the school administration.

- *The Principals' Forum* meets bi-weekly or as needed and reports directly to the curriculum director. This group, consisting of all building principals, meets in order to coordinate ongoing school activities and to plan future activities of which curriculum is only a part. The superintendent and other central office personnel are usually in attendance at these meetings.

- *The Math, Social Studies, Science, and Language Arts Advisory Councils* meet as the need arises, usually three or four times a year, and report directly to a building principal or central office supervisor. This person is responsible for one of those content areas. The function of this group is to coordinate the curriculum for that content area K-12 and develop a five-year plan for curriculum development. This group decides what the curriculum committees will do for the

³ Rensis Likert. *New Patterns of Management*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961.

year and makes recommendations on curriculum revisions and text adoptions to the curriculum director. The advisory councils are chaired by a principal and have a "linking pin" member from the Student Forum, the Citizens' Curriculum Advisory Council, and the Pupil Personnel Services Council. The rest of the council membership consists of the department chairperson from the high school and two curriculum committee chairpersons—one K-4 and one 5-8. The curriculum director serves as a resource on this committee. A variation in this procedure would be a teacher representative from each building in the district instead of the two curriculum committee chairpersons.

• *The Content Area Curriculum Committees* consist of teachers chaired by one of their own members, with a principal serving as a resource and "linking pin" with the administration. These groups are the workhorses of the school system. Systemwide involvement and commitment are gained by having teachers on this committee from each grade and by building in the content area subdivision. Additionally, one member of each committee must serve on the next closest grade level committee. For example, one member of the K-4 language arts curriculum committee is assigned to the 5-8 language arts curriculum committee. The 5-8 committee must assign a member to the K-4 and 9-12 committee. Likewise, the 9-12 committee must assign a member to the 5-8 committee. These linking pins between committees facilitate the coordination of the content areas (K-12).

The function of curriculum committees is:

- To examine textbooks and supplementary materials
- To develop courses of study and curriculum guides
- To devise evaluative techniques to measure objectives
- To examine new approaches for achieving school system objectives.

The work of these groups must be approved by the content area advisory councils, which in turn must be approved by the curriculum director and finally, in the case of textbooks and courses of study, by the superintendent and the Board of Education.

• *Other Content Area Advisory Councils*, because of the small number of people involved and the specialty of the subject area, these groups have a different composition from the other curriculum advisory council. Membership on this council will normally consist of a content area coordinator, teachers, and an administrator. Other interest groups, for example, students or citizens, should be involved if possible. The content area coordinator assumes responsibility for one of these councils, for example, art, music, business, and home economics, and sees to the accomplishment of the same tasks as assigned to the four main curriculum advisory councils and corresponding committees.

In the final analysis, while three components for successful curriculum development were suggested only one of the components is absolutely necessary, that is, the organizational structure. The organizational structure presented allows for a diffusion of the power base and establishes a communication system that facilitates the free flow of information—upward, downward, and horizontally. Normally, the power to make curricular changes is held by someone in the formal system, for example, the principal or a central office administrator. This creates a situation where the power is held by a few people who make the decisions. Change can occur in such a situation, but it is usually a paper change and not one that occurs in practice or, if it occurs in practice, usually the staff commitment to the change is not strong enough to institutionalize it.

The organizational structure presented creates another system outside of the formal system that incorporates the formal system, insofar as principals and central office administrators are involved in curriculum committees. The system presented takes the power that is held by principals and central office administrators and gives some of it to teachers, students, and citizens. As a result of their having a piece of the action and having some control over what happens to them, some interesting things are possible: teachers will work harder than they ever have before on curriculum; the school staff will experience self-renewal and revitalization as a result of the opportunity to make decisions and demonstrate leadership; changes made will have the commitment of the school staff; students and community will be

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involved in curricular decisions; new strategies for achieving school system goals are more likely to be institutionalized; a communication system will have been established which allows for the free flow of information (K-12); problems of scope and sequence in content areas will be dealt with; curriculum guides and courses of study of practical value will be developed; and the central office administrator in charge of curriculum will be deluged by requests from teachers who want to try things. [4]

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