

In schools and school districts, successful curriculum planning takes many forms.

A SIMPLE STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

MALCOLM D. EVANS

A statement of philosophy to establish program goals and guide professional practice is a frequent and real need for curriculum leaders. In Montgomery Township, our local faculty committee used an approach to problem solving derived from Frankena¹ to prepare a philosophy of education from which goals could be derived for a program for gifted and talented children.

To say what ought to be done and why, we adopted a four-step procedure:

1. Prepare a list of dispositions that the group believes should be cultivated. These may be specific skills, particular knowledge or personality

traits, or personal characteristics, described with broad, inclusive words or phrases. We thought, for example, that gifted and talented children should:

—Be comfortable with their strengths.

—Think divergently.

—Develop a sense of responsibility to self and others.

2. Prepare a statement of the group's assumptions about why the dispositions should be cultivated and what ought to be done to cultivate them. These should be fairly specific statements. We assumed, for example, that:

—Development of gifted and talented children is necessary for the good of society.

—Institutional and economic factors should not influence develop-

ment of certain talents and neglect of others.

3. Prepare a related statement that provides a factual base of what is known about teaching and learning related to the dispositions to be cultivated. We knew, for example, that:

—Gifted and talented children are not well identified in most schools.

—The incidence of giftedness is low, creating special organizational problems for small schools.

—Underachievement and poor motivation are found among children identified as gifted and talented.

4. Describe the group's conclusions as to the what, how, and when of cultivating the desired dispositions. These, of necessity, will be few but important. We decided, for example, that we should:

—Create faculty awareness.

—Produce long-range goals.

—Plan specific programs.

The next step was to capture these beliefs in a normative statement useful to the committee members, their colleagues, and other interested adults. We recommend a similar process to other professionals seeking to prepare a philosophy from which program goals can be generated. ■

¹William K. Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education* (Chicago: Scott Foresman, 1965), pp. 8-11.

Malcolm D. Evans is Superintendent, Montgomery Township Schools, Skillman, New Jersey.

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