

# A CURRICULUM MODEL THAT WORKS

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To have quality programs, secondary schools must provide for continuity, emphasize sequence, and consider the integration of knowledge. The curriculum model we've been using in the Bloomsburg Area School District meets these specifications (Figure 1).

During the first year, the administration, department chairs, and faculty in the priority subject area collect and evaluate materials. From an assessment of needs in that area, the

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curriculum committee develops a plan of action.

In the second year, the committee begins to carry out its plan. Teachers are informed that their involvement at this stage is voluntary. Those who wish to serve are encouraged to do so. Later, however, all teachers are expected to use the resulting curriculum. The committee's responsibilities include (1) reviewing existing programs, (2) attending local, state, national conferences and workshops, (3) working with content area consultants, and (4) writing the rough draft of the curriculum.

The third year brings curriculum revision, plans for pilot programs, and inservice for the entire faculty. The board publicly reviews progress of the committee's work to keep the community informed.

In the fourth year, the district moves toward full implementation. Meetings are held periodically to follow up the program and to develop an evaluation plan that measures what the district and state intend the curriculum to teach. Additional inservice is provided as needed.

In the last year of the model, the program is evaluated. The results are submitted to the board and used to determine direction to be taken in the future.

A master schedule has been developed so that in any one year, two or three departments are at each step in the five-year sequence. Advantages of this plan include:

1. Curriculum renewal is scheduled in a specific content area each year;

2. Materials and equipment can be replaced systematically;

3. Inservice education is more focused;

4. Budget requirements can be projected in advance;

5. Communication is improved between the community, the board, the administration, and the faculty concerning curriculum and instructional matters.

In our situation, the model also fits into a long-range planning program required by the state.

# REINVENTING THE CURRICULUM WHEEL

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During an inservice conference in California several years ago, a staff developer remarked that we should have more educators reinventing the wheel, not because we need more wheels, but because we need more inventors. Why? To get lasting local commitment.

The following is a seven-stage model for curriculum development over a two-year period which I have used in three different school districts over the past 13 years.

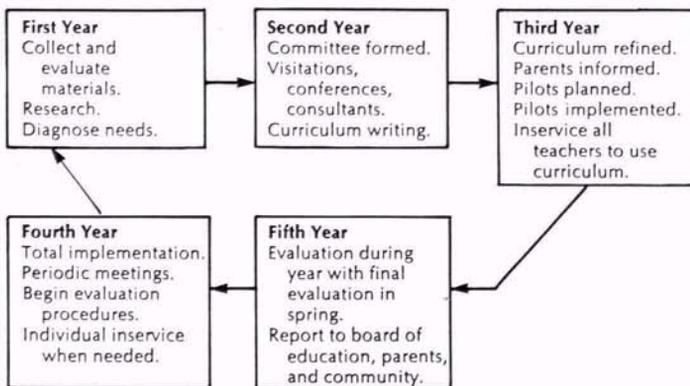
It assumes that the duration and depth of curriculum change in a school district is directly related to the number of classroom teachers actively involved in the development of the new curriculum.

## Stage 1: Identify Teams

• The first step is to form four teams of representative groups of

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Figure 1. Bloomsburg Area Curriculum Model.



teachers who have an interest in the area to be revised. These teams meet at separate times, each team working on the curriculum at a different stage of its development.

- Two teacher-leaders should be chosen to work with each team, providing consistent writing style, and keeping teams on task throughout the project.

- Team members should have released time from their teaching responsibilities to work on the curriculum.

### Stage 2: Develop Concepts and Skills

- The first team meets and defines why the subject is important to teach; that is, they establish a *local* rationale for the curriculum.

- Team 1 then uses some externally prepared framework such as a state or county curriculum guide to select: (a) the key concepts for each grade level and (b) the scope of skills for the new local curriculum. This work could require four different half-days of meeting time.

### Stage 3. Select Content Materials

- Team 2 now convenes. The teacher-leaders orient the new team and become an active part of it. Team 2's task is to decide the content for each grade level by using the approved conceptual framework and skills list as the criteria for evaluating published texts and multi-media programs.

### Stage 4: Decide on Evaluation Strategies

- Team 3 convenes to develop evaluation methods. The same teacher-leaders again assume leadership of this new team. Members of team 3 may at first think their task is simply to invent some paper-and-pencil measures to assess factual-level learning in the cognitive domain, so the teacher-leaders' task is to broaden the notion of evaluation to include:

—Other devices such as the systematic interview, observation, analysis of student writing, and various criterion measures such as checklists of behaviors and understandings.

—Not only factual-level learning, but learning at other cognitive levels such as comprehension, analysis, and synthesis.

—Not only the cognitive domain, but also the affective domain.

The importance of a balanced evaluation approach in a new local curriculum cannot be overemphasized. If it is true that one of the best ways to change curriculum is to change the tests students take, then a key to curriculum development is to broaden teacher and community understanding of the many ways we can validly assess student progress.

- With evaluation methods specified, the first draft of the curriculum should now be typed for distribution.

### Stage 5: Pilot-Testing and Revision

- At this point, members of Team 4 each trial-teach in their own classrooms one unit or subunit of the new curriculum after an orientation by the teacher-leaders.

- Team members develop criteria for judging the outcomes of the trial-teaching so the results can be used systematically in the revision process. Criteria could include (1) Appropriateness of concepts and skills expected to be taught at each grade level, (2) Interest and readability of the materials, and (3) Adequacy of evaluation devices. A four-week period for trial-teaching should be adequate if the curriculum is divided so that different parts are tested simultaneously.

- Team 4 then convenes and makes editorial changes in the draft of the curriculum based on the outcomes of the trials.

- The curriculum is re-drafted and duplicated for dissemination and school board level discussion.

- Team 4 begins its next action: planning for implementation. Just as with evaluation, multiple approaches are critical at this stage. Team members need to take responsibility not only for planning inservice sessions but also for conducting at least a portion of the sessions themselves.

### Stage 6: Implementation Through Inservice Education

- When the school board approves the new curriculum, Team 4 implements the curriculum districtwide through inservice sessions. However, team members of all four teams may also share responsibility for conducting various small-group portions of the presentation, preferably at their own grade levels or in their own schools.

- These "one-shot" presentations are not adequate inservice; they are only orientation. Inservice continues on an *individualized* basis. In this stage, members of all four development teams become "resource teachers" for the new curriculum for a period of a year. Each works a total of four days with four different "teachers-in-training."

- Each resource teacher confers with a teacher-in-training to determine which of the following will help him or her gain the necessary knowledge and skills of the new curriculum: one-to-one conferences on materials and teaching ideas, observation of the resource teacher's classroom by the teacher-in-training, observation of the teacher-in-training by the resource teacher with follow-up critique, or demonstration teaching by the resource teacher in the classroom of the teacher-in-training, followed by a conference.

- The resource teacher then works with the other teacher in whichever mode is agreed upon. In this way, the dissemination of the curriculum at the classroom level is decentralized and *personalized* at the peer level.

### Stage 7: Public Information

- All teachers using the new curriculum now re-invent the last "spoke" of the wheel. That is presenting to the public (especially parents) examples of the many kinds of student products growing out of the new program that clearly show children are mastering skills and content. Three possible ways are to: (1) Show samples of student's written work from such activities as discussion, debates, field trips, or other highly engaging experiences; (2) Display student-made graphs and charts involving the use of data; (3) At a school board meeting have students present brief summaries of an important issue they have researched and thought about through the new curriculum. This final "spoke" ensures that community support will accompany professional support for the new curriculum.

With a little imagination and effort, we can surprise ourselves and our communities at how vital any new program can be as the result of professional reinvention of the curriculum wheel. ■

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