The major curriculum problem in many school districts isn't so much development as it is management. Too many teachers teach what they want, when they want. Individual teachers and schools within a system cannot function as independent school districts if public schools are to retain the faith, trust, and respect of the general public.

Rewriting the curriculum is obviously not the solution to the problem of curriculum anarchy. The solution is district leadership with appropriate involvement of administrators, teachers, and parents.

The terms curriculum and instruction are frequently used interchangeably. They are related but different. Curriculum is the what to be taught—usually derived from philosophy and goals—while instruction is the how, generally dependent on the expertise of teachers.

The mission of management is to ensure that the curriculum actually taught to each student, regardless of his or her school and classroom, encompasses a set of basic skills and a common core of knowledge as defined by the community. This defined curriculum must reflect a balance between district direction and freedom for individual schools and teachers. Ideally, the curriculum should be 70 percent district-directed, in terms of content and time, and 30 percent based on students' needs and teachers' talents. The mission must be communicated to teachers, students, parents, and administrators in such a way as to gain individual commitment to the group effort.

Public announcement of curriculum goals is based on two assumptions: (1) that teachers, students, and administrators want to know the curriculum expectations of the district and the structure and direction these expectations provide; and (2) that curriculum decisions can benefit from critique and revision by the district's teachers, administrators, and community members.

Three levels of curriculum can be used to solicit this support: (1) learning charts, (2) curriculum guides, and (3) lesson plans. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships among these three levels.

These levels provide a common language among all participants and close the communication gaps that arise when the expectations of the school system and its schools are not reasonable, attainable, and public.

### Learning Charts
Although all districts have curriculums, stated or otherwise, people have different perceptions of what they are. One way to create awareness and expectation is by involving teachers, administrators, and parents in development of K-12 learning charts. Elementary learning charts show specific examples of learner outcomes by grade and content area and time devoted to each area. Secondary learning charts list courses and their major goals and outcomes, essential skills to be gained, and skills necessary to demonstrate excellence in an area of study.

Once such charts are developed and posted throughout the district, teachers and the public become suddenly aware of the curriculum. The mere act of putting the curriculum on a chart and posting it creates expectations and changes individual school curriculums as teachers attempt to match their activities to the chart.

### Curriculum Guides
We often hear that curriculum guides are glanced at, placed on a shelf, and never touched again by human hands. We must remember that the second level of curriculum delineates the what; if a teacher has this firmly in mind, there isn't a real need to use the guide on a daily basis.

Curriculum guides communicate the expected curriculum in terms of performance goals and instructional objectives. Although guides can take many forms, they should include suggested resources (such as textbook pages and A-V materials), teaching activities, and evaluation methods.
Content Lesson Plans

The third level of curriculum is the lesson plans for each objective together with supportive worksheets and other student materials. Since the how of curriculum is debatable among teachers, this level of curriculum needs to be developed at the school, not district level—although the district may in some cases provide the necessary funds.

Through the development of learning charts, curriculum guides, and content lesson plans, the curriculum becomes legitimate because expectations have been made public. When the curriculum has structure and integrity, citizens respect and trust the public schools.

1 Curriculum learning charts are available from the Mesa Public Schools, 549 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, Arizona 85202.

TAKING CONTROL OF A RUDDERLESS CURRICULUM

STU ERVAY AND DAN LUMLEY

The grimmest possible news a ship's captain can receive is that the rudder is damaged and the ship is out of control. Like the captain of the Bismarck in World War II, many superintendents have had to face the fact that their curriculum is out of control.

Harold Hosey, superintendent of a 4,000 student district in Emporia, Kansas, moved to regain control of a rudderless curriculum when, in 1974, he recommended appointment of two curriculum coordinators who had close ties with principals and teachers. His board approved.

The Emporia district took its first hesitant steps along the road to coordination by establishing an instructional improvement committee made up of parents, teachers, and students. After a jittery start and tumultuous town meeting, they decided to conduct a needs assessment using the Phi Delta Kappa plan. To no one's surprise, reading and writing improvement were assigned top priority. Gaining a general education ranked second, and developing good character and self-respect ranked third out of the eighteen goals.

The easy part was over. District goals had been determined and endorsed by the board of education. The hard part was to translate the identified goals into substantive curriculum change with a group of ambivalent teachers in autonomous buildings.

Turning a deaf ear to detractors concerned about the district's plethora of committees, the two coordinators established a standing committee heavily staffed with classroom teachers. Membership consisted of a central office administrator, elementary teachers for each grade level (K-6), an elementary principal, a middle school principal, a high school principal, and department representatives from grades 7 through 12. The elementary and secondary coordinators co-chaired the group.

The Superintendent's Curriculum Council, as it was later to be called, was now ready to tackle the elusive goal of subject area coordination. During the first meeting someone asked, "Which subject area should we study first?" Teachers and administrators unanimously answered "social studies." There was widespread belief at the time that K-12 social studies curriculum was characterized by gaps and repetition. With each school and teacher operating independently, however, nothing had been done to correct the problem.

The coordinators set out to devise a coordination model that would be compatible with contemporary teacher prerogatives. They knew that if teachers didn't feel a strong sense of ownership in the process, any resulting plan would be ignored.

Using the process English (1979) called "curriculum mapping," they asked teachers to describe in detail what they were actually teaching, then charted the results on butcher paper. Next, using that information, they prepared a new K-12 scope and sequence. When the final product was presented to district teachers on an inservice day at the beginning of a new school year, it was very well received. Many teachers and counselors displayed the charts on the walls of their classrooms.

Since then Emporia has studied and developed plans for mathematics, health, science, reading, and language arts curriculums. Each year a number of council meetings are devoted to evaluating the effectiveness of a particular scope and sequence.

Curriculum as a Top Priority

The secret for whatever success Emporia has had lies primarily in the fact that curriculum has been given top billing in almost everything the district undertakes—budget meetings, textbook selection, and personnel hiring and assessment. Curriculum topics are publicized in the district's newsletter and press releases and appear in the agenda of many board meetings. The two curriculum coordinators are given broad responsibility and authority for ensuring that no one, from noncertified employees to the superintendent forgets that curriculum is the tool with which teachers help student learn.

Reference

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