

# Identifying Futures Trends in Curriculum Planning

A 36-member task force surveyed trends and set directions for the Virginia Beach Public Schools.

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As one aspect of a comprehensive study of curriculum needs, the Virginia Beach, Virginia, schools formed a 36-person task force to examine futures literature and identify trends that could have an impact on education.

The futures and technology subcommittee of the task force studied alternative futures, reviewed the literature on educational planning, and examined the effects of science and technology. Their report listed 41 trends, each with several implications.

For example, task force members felt that "proliferation of knowledge" and "increasing specialization within the fields of knowledge" implied three separate curriculum needs: (1) interdisciplinary treatment of selected common themes, (2) a balance between stressing acquisition of facts and developing process skills, and (3) textbooks serving as just one of the resource materials used in curricula.

The task force selected 15 implications as having the most significance for Virginia Beach schools:

## 1. Basic Academic Skills

Increase emphasis on communication skills, mathematics, and science. A strong general education should be the basis for all vocations.

## 2. Computers and Other Information Technologies

Incorporate computers and other information technologies as a meaningful part of and vehicle for the education of all students. Develop a comprehensive plan for the appropriate uses of technology in the Virginia Beach City Public School System, including a computer literacy program for kindergarten through grade twelve.

## 3. Curriculum Flexibility

Provide greater opportunities for enrichment and acceleration in the areas of

the curriculum, kindergarten through grade twelve.

## 4. Curriculum Revision

Develop a more comprehensive plan for ensuring the ongoing, systematic evaluation and revision of curriculum.

## 5. Democratic Ideals

Emphasize an understanding of, respect for, and involvement in the democratic process.

## 6. Early Childhood Programs

Expand early childhood programs (pre-kindergarten) that emphasize developmental learning experiences.

## 7. Futures Perspective

Incorporate a futures orientation into all areas of the curriculum. The orientation should reflect and address contemporary issues, future trends, and the relationship of the present to past events and alternative futures.

## 8. Global Interrelationships

Emphasize a world view of interdependence, economics, and ethnic-cultural diversity in the curriculum.

## 9. Lifelong Learning

Expand opportunities for members of the school's community to pursue learning as a lifelong activity.

## 10. Mass Media

Establish an increased emphasis on critical analysis, listening, and viewing skills as related to media interpretation.

## 11. Personal Fulfillment

Place greater emphasis in the schooling process on building positive self-images and interpersonal relationships.

## 12. Process Approach

Focus on problem solving, decision making, creativity, and the higher-level thinking skills of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

## 13. Staff Development

Increase opportunities for staff development, particularly in the area of the new technologies.

## 14. Use of Community

Increase the use of parent and community resources in the educational program and link classroom work to experiences in the community.

## 15. Vocational and Career Education

Ensure that vocational and career education reflect the changing concepts of work and promote personal aspirations.

These implications were reviewed by staff members, the community, and students to determine priorities. They made every effort to ensure correspondence between the implications and a philosophy statement that had been developed earlier by the staff and community. Thus, the recommendations were not always congruent with the future-generated trends and concepts. For example, the increase in single-parent homes, working parents, and divorce has magnified the need for preschool education. Yet the philosophy and community consensus contradict the desirability of Virginia Beach schools assuming responsibility for preschool education.

From our standpoint, it was important to clarify such issues. We wanted to balance the analysis of futures trends with the collective wisdom of our community. We believe the result has been a future-oriented curriculum plan that is also practical and politically acceptable. □

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