Outcome-Based Educational Planning

Citizens and educators in Whitmore Lake, Michigan, have agreed on the relative responsibilities of the individual, home, school, and community for helping students become self-sufficient adults.

GAIL M. STEPHENS AND JERRY J. HERMAN

More and more people these days want to be involved in educational planning and to know what is being accomplished in the schools. Decision makers in the Whitmore Lake, Michigan, Schools have responded to this interest by devising a plan to guide curriculum development and policy formulation in the district. This outcome-based planning model increases the potential for success because it starts by obtaining consensus on desired results (Figure 1).

For the most part, decisions about schooling made by educators and policy makers have traditionally been based on assumptions about desired results, some of which were outdated, too narrowly or broadly based, or simply not widely agreed upon. The outcome-based planning model:

1. Emphasizes planning that starts with desired outcomes.
2. Involves students, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, and community members in the planning process.
3. Spells out the responsibilities of students, the home, the school, and other social institutions in helping students achieve the desired outcomes by the time they graduate from high school. The power of outcome-based planning lies in directing all instructional elements toward thoroughly defined and highly desired educational goals. Once planners have defined the desired

Gail M. Stephens is Superintendent, Whitmore Lake Public Schools, Whitmore Lake, Michigan. Jerry J. Herman is Superintendent, Greece Central School District, Greece, New York.
results, resources can be efficiently mobilized to bring about required changes.

Desired Results
From the beginning of the project, it was clear to all planning members that students graduating in the future will need knowledge and skills in addition to, or different from, those currently being developed in schools. The team agreed that attitudes and values should also be reexamined in light of the knowledge and skills that will become the new basics.

The planning team reviewed trend extrapolations and futurist materials, held numerous discussions, and participated in a series of exercises, all of which culminated in agreement on what the future should be for Whitmore Lake students who are to enter kindergarten in 1984 and beyond. The team also reached consensus on the desired result of schooling at Whitmore Lake: graduates who would be self-sufficient adults—defined as individuals who produce more than they consume.

What's Next?
Having determined the desirable outcomes of schooling in Whitmore Lake, planners next analyzed the instructional elements currently in place in the school system. This involved several tasks, which were carried out simultaneously.

An instructional audit was conducted to analyze such factors as use of available learning time, student test results, student attendance, degree to which teachers teach to objectives, and other instructional elements.

Professional staff members conducted a systematic review of key areas of the curriculum. With the ten goal areas providing a new classification of curriculum, the development of mastery objectives was a critical second phase activity.

Basics for Survival was the first goal area under review and development. This year mastery objectives were writ-
ten; introduction, reinforcement, and mastery expectancy levels were identified; and test items were developed for language arts and math outcomes. Next year the district will apply this review and development process to the remaining Basics for Survival outcomes, which include such items as general understanding of the law, study habits, and typing and keyboard techniques.

We also expect in the coming year to complete the development of mastery objectives for the Planning and Problem Solving goal area, which covers what is traditionally included in the science curriculum as well as such items as the principles of logic, higher level thinking skills, and resource utilization. Within five years the review and development process should be completed for the remaining eight goal areas.

Policies have been written to provide a solid structure and direction for subsequent implementation of future changes. The board of education has adopted policies on mission and goals, school climate, mastery learning, time for learning, a testing and monitoring program, effective instructional practices, enrichment and accelerated learning programs, homework, curriculum development, teacher supervision and evaluation, attendance, and grading and reporting to parents.

In addition, the board of education is reviewing graduation requirements, including a way to align student outcomes with traditional Carnegie units. This should ultimately result in major revisions in the high school instructional program, including changes in course content and scheduling.

Enroute and longitudinal indicators of outcome achievement are being identified and a monitoring system developed. Concurrently, the professional staff has begun to review, refine, and restructure the district's curriculum guides based on the desired outcomes, and to develop mastery assessment materials.

Benefits
The understandings and awareness created by using an outcome-based planning model, which involves and defines the responsibilities of students, parents, community members, and school people, have been very beneficial to the Whitmore Lake School District. The process has given us the support we need and a method we can use to develop and implement an innovative delivery system that promises to achieve the desired outcomes we have agreed upon.