

Preface

This is a book about how to do curriculum work. Curriculum work is an essential function of leadership in schools because it is through the curriculum development process that we identify purpose, define activity, and rationalize decision making in schools. Curriculum work often separates the poor school from the excellent school. A school without a defined curriculum can be likened to a ship without a rudder; it lacks direction and is easily blown off course.

Many different kinds of people in a school can participate in curriculum work, including building principals, assistant principals for curriculum, department heads, teaching team leaders, and classroom teachers on special assignment. It is the activity, rather than the title, that determines who will provide curriculum leadership in an educational institution. Often, a person may be assigned such a leadership role without any formal preparation or real understanding. This book guides such people through the development processes that make up sound curriculum leadership in a school setting.

There are two distinct conceptualizations of curriculum leadership present in schools. First, there is a *static* or managerial kind of curriculum leadership that seeks to maintain and keep current all existing programs. Examples of static or maintenance functions are subject-matter reviews, accreditation reviews, and regularly scheduled in-service programs like the orientation of new teachers. Static curriculum leaders try to produce a degree of predictability and routine in the day-to-day operation of schools.

A second and very different kind of curriculum leadership is *dynamic* (leading). This leadership focuses on constructing new programs to meet the changing needs of schools and our society. Adapting the curriculum to the power of new technologies, for example, requires new and creative ways of thinking about education at a school site. Dynamic curriculum leaders establish direction, motivate people, and clarify the steps for changing. In contrast to maintenance leadership, the dynamic curriculum leader makes things happen; it is a visionary and forceful kind of leadership.

This book addresses both static and dynamic curriculum leadership, but is biased toward a dynamic role for those involved in curriculum work.

I believe that the degree of change being experienced by our nation, and the world at-large, demands that curriculum leaders be active and visionary. Upon completion of this book, the reader will understand both roles of curriculum leadership in a school setting.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

The chapters of this book will take the reader from a conceptual understanding of the curriculum function to the actual construction of school programs. Following a general curriculum cycle of analyzing, designing, implementing, and evaluating, the reader will begin with defining purpose in school work and an introduction to the basic tasks of curriculum work. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 define effective curriculum leadership and the basic tasks of curriculum leadership, aligning the reader to the development process.

Beginning with Chapter 3 and continuing through Chapter 9, the book provides the reader with detailed methods for bringing curriculum work to life in a school setting. Clarifying your destination by making the curriculum more purposeful (Chapter 3), building the school curriculum team (Chapter 4), and constructing the path for curriculum improvement (Chapter 5) are the prerequisites for successful practice. Detailed planning (Chapter 6), meaningful staff development (Chapter 7), and sound evaluation (Chapter 8) are key to the full implementation of curriculum plans. Finally, in Chapter 9, I provide insights from 30 years of field experience developing successful school curricula.

The reader will note various tools provided to assist in understanding curriculum work. In Chapters 3–9, a sample curriculum problem is introduced along with the identification of tasks required of the curriculum leader. Many of the identified tasks are illustrated by the 24 reproducible planning sheets in Resource A; these are forms drawn from real schools and real problems.

In addition to these forms, I have provided the reader with a master list of standard curriculum planning resources (Resource B), curriculum resource Internet sites (Resource C), some recommended resources for keeping up-to-date in the field of curriculum development (Resource D), and a glossary of terms to help the reader comprehend the literature of this area (Resource E).

As the reader proceeds through this book, the development process in curriculum work will unfold as a logical and clear way to provide leadership in schools. The reader will discover that curriculum leadership is a natural kind of activity in school settings, and that by focusing on school improvement, other day-to-day tasks of leading will follow effortlessly.