

# Preface

---

**O**ne hot June day many years ago, we met briefly at 7:30 in the morning to exchange materials before heading off for separate consulting jobs in school districts 150 miles apart. As we talked, we discovered we had each been hired to do essentially the same thing: help administrators and teachers design models and processes to improve curriculum in their districts. The questions posed to us in both places were remarkably similar: How is curriculum put together? What should be included? Who should be involved? How long will it take? How should we go about it?

These questions were not unlike those asked of us in many other school districts that did not have a curriculum generalist on staff—and many do not. For several years, while both employed by school districts, we had received far more requests to consult on curriculum projects than either of us could possibly accommodate. More and more frequently, we found ourselves sending off materials we had developed in our own work to aid those whose requests for direct assistance we were forced to refuse. Feedback we received indicated that the materials we provided served very well in our absence.

Over time, we had grown increasingly concerned about the questions we were rarely asked: What should be considered and acted upon in implementing the curriculum? How is curriculum evaluated? In far too many districts, energy seemed to be focused only on completing the written curriculum guide, rather than on the quality of the experience and learning of students. If the time spent on curriculum development is ultimately to be valued by teachers and to benefit students, it must be followed by sufficient support in the form of materials, planning time, and professional development required to implement the curriculum, as well as by systematic attention to results. Any one of these components alone is unlikely to result in substantive improvement of learning and teaching.

That brief early-morning conversation was the starting point for this book, designed to guide educators throughout the curriculum process. Since that time, states across the nation have adopted standards for student learning and have implemented programs of high-stakes testing based on those standards and their associated performance indicators and grade-level expectations. Technology applications in schools and districts have grown exponentially. Schools and districts continue to struggle with designing, implementing, and evaluating systems of standards-based curriculum. This book reflects these realities and includes material on the design of common assessments, while at the same time providing a simple, straightforward process schools and districts can use to guide them through the process of developing curriculum systems.

## **SPECIAL FEATURES OF THIS BOOK**

This book is a toolkit of essential resources to support development, implementation, and evaluation of high quality curriculum in schools and districts and includes

- Guidelines to lead the reader through the process
- Examples from schools and districts

- Worksheets to guide the processes described in the text
- Graphics that illustrate key points,
- Strategies that have been proven to work,
- Vignettes to illustrate key content, and
- Questions to promote reflection.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

Many questions must be answered in designing a curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation cycle, as shown in Figure P.1.

These questions establish the framework for this book, and ways and means to approach answering them are detailed in the chapters that follow. The comprehensive process that is provided can be tailored to meet the needs of particular schools and districts. Those who are more experienced will likely be able to combine steps or skip steps altogether. For example, in districts in which a vision statement has recently been adopted, there is no need to create another one. Those just beginning curriculum work will find it helpful to review the entire book and then work through it chapter by chapter.

**Figure P.1** Considerations in the Development of a Districtwide Curriculum Process

What is the district’s vision for standards and student learning?  
 What is the timeline for curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation?

**Development**

**Before:**

- How will information from the current program evaluation be used?
- What resources are needed?
  - How much time will it take?
  - When will meetings take place?
  - How much will it cost?
  - What materials are required?
  - What standards and performance indicators will be incorporated?
  - What training do committee members need?
  - What sources of expertise are available (consultants, access to current educational literature, staff members, sample curriculum documents from other districts, etc.)?
  - Is sufficient clerical support available?
- What will be the size and composition of committees (representation, selection vs. appointment, etc.)?
- Who will serve as chairperson?

**During:**

- How will the committee solicit and receive input and feedback?
- At what points in the process will this be done?
- How will communication with teachers, administrators, and the community take place?
- What are the ground rules for committee meetings?
- How will curriculum documents be approved?
- What is the basis for decision making?
- What issues and concerns may arise during the development process?

*(Continued)*

Figure P.1 (Continued)

**After:**

- What besides scope and sequence will the curriculum guidelines contain?
  - Purpose Statement?
  - Goals?
  - Materials and Resources?
  - Instructional Guidelines?
  - Needs and Recommendations?
  - Program Evaluation Statement?
  - Appendices?
  - Glossary?
  - Bibliography?
  - Timelines?

**Implementation****Before:**

- How will the curriculum be phased in?
  - What training and support do teachers and administrators require or desire?
  - How much money will it cost?
  - How much time will it take?
  - What materials are required?
- How will all teachers and administrators be provided with the opportunity to become familiar with the contents of the curriculum document?
- How will community members become familiar with the curriculum?
- Who is responsible for what?

**During:**

- Do student/teacher interactions (learning experiences provided, materials and instructional strategies used) match the intent and specifications of the instructional guidelines?
- How are students provided with opportunities to master the objectives and attain the goals of the curriculum?
- How is the learning of individual students assessed and evaluated?
- What common assessments are needed?
- How is the curriculum reflected in day-to-day decision making and communication?
  - Budget?
  - Staff development?
  - Teacher evaluation?

**After:**

- Do student learning outcomes match the goals and objectives of the curriculum?

**Evaluation****Before:**

- What questions need to be answered through program evaluation? (Note: These need to be based directly on the curriculum guidelines.)
- What methods of assessment are best suited to the questions?
- What assessment tools are best suited to answer the assessment questions?
- What resources are needed?
  - Time?
  - Money?
  - Expertise?
- Who is responsible for what?

**During:**

- How will data be collected? By whom?
- How will the data be analyzed? By whom?

**After:**

- Who will write the evaluation report?
- What will the report contain?
- How will the results be used?
- How will the results be communicated? To whom?