

How do teachers determine the selection of the content taught from the huge volume of content that could be taught . . . or is it really chosen for them?

The Curriculum

Outline

I. Looking at the Formal or Scholastic Curriculum – the Academic Course of Study

A. Formal or Scholastic Curriculum (plural curricula) is the set of courses and their contents (content is often broken down into student learning in the areas of knowledge, skills, dispositions) offered by an institution such as a school or university. The basic curriculum is established by each state with the individual school districts adjusting it to their desires. In Ohio, the officially adopted State curriculum is called the Course of Study.

The formal curriculum consists of courses that tend to emphasize individual intellectual development – teachers view this curriculum from a combination of three orientations

- Academic Subjects Orientation: organize and deliver content according to the traditional academic disciplines (English, Biology, Art, etc.) emerging idea is to integrate content by broad fields (Current Ohio Teaching Standards)
- Needs of Society Orientation: select content important for jobs, citizenship and character development
- Learner Centered Orientation: select content that is developmentally appropriate based on age and ability of the student(s)

“Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past.” (George Orwell) do teachers enlighten students or keep them in the dark?

“We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us.” (Winston Churchill) are you shaped as a teacher by the kind of education you received (grade school, high school, college)?

B. State Curriculum and Testing Requirements

- a. State Curriculum Standards – like it or not, you must deal with these standards
 - The Case FOR Curriculum Standards – they provide a common set of targets thus promoting educational equity
 - The Case AGAINST Curriculum Standards – too often these standards assume students are headed for a common direction; biased selection based on well-organized pressure groups; borrow heavily from the national standards therefore bypass local control.
- b. Standardized Tests – like it or not, you must deal with these tests
 - The Case FOR Standardized Tests – creates norms that allow comparisons among students, teachers, schools that helps the general public and administrators make judgments; provides a focus for you to as a teacher by limiting what you need to teach.
 - The Case AGAINST Standardized Tests – can we really determine performance based on a one day, paper and pencil test; so many variables influence test scores what can we really say about the quality of our instruction.

II. Looking at Curriculum Differently – Outside the Academic Course of Study

B. Co-curriculum / Extra-curriculum consists of school programs that tend to emphasize group skill achievement – athletics, band, chorus, orchestra, theater, dances, drill teams, student publications, student government and other student clubs.

“The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton” (Duke of Wellington)

For the majority of students these experiences likely produced more memories (both good and bad) than the formal academic learning experiences.

Advocates point out that extracurricular activities foster/nurture skills and positively affect attitudes in the areas of:

- Leadership, teamwork, persistence, creativity
- Social interactions between sexes; improve relations between races
- Set higher career aspirations
- Improve self-esteem
- Foster civic participation
- May positively affect class grades

Who participates in these activities?

- Small schools have a higher participation rate.
- The smarter the student, the higher participation rate.
- The more affluent the student, the higher the participation rate (money, time, parent model)

Why do students say they participate?

- Genuine interest and enjoyment
- To be popular, to have increased status, to be with members of opposite sex
- To be admitted to a prestigious college

C. Hidden Curriculum – messages from teachers, classroom interactions, tracking, peers that provide subtle signals to students as to what is important . . .

- 1) learn to sit and wait, wait your turn, postpone gratification
- 2) learn to deal with interruptions
- 3) learn to deal with the neutral or flat tone of most classes (deal with boredom)
- 4) learn deference to authority, learn to be passive
- 5) learn the answer to the question . . . “Am I a good or bad student, person, winner or loser?”

book by Ralph Keyes “Is There Life After High School”

D. Inner Curriculum – students use past experiences and expectations to filter the information in the curriculum

a. Charlotte’s internal voice – “The perspective the teacher is presenting is not important information because it is counter to what I believe about the situation.”

b. Janet’s internal voice – “It is important for me to do well in this subject because I want to please my teacher.”

c. Randy’s internal voice – “Doing school work is unimportant; doing well in school is not significant in my family.”

d. Roger’s internal voice – “This class is boring; the teacher does not make it interesting enough for me to care about it.”

e. Mike’s internal voice – “This activity and discussion is a waste of time because this material will not be on the test.”

f. Darrin’s internal voice – “All my classes are crucial to me because I need to know all the right answers and get good grades in all my classes to have any chance for a college scholarship.”