

Curriculum...Everything that Goes on in the School



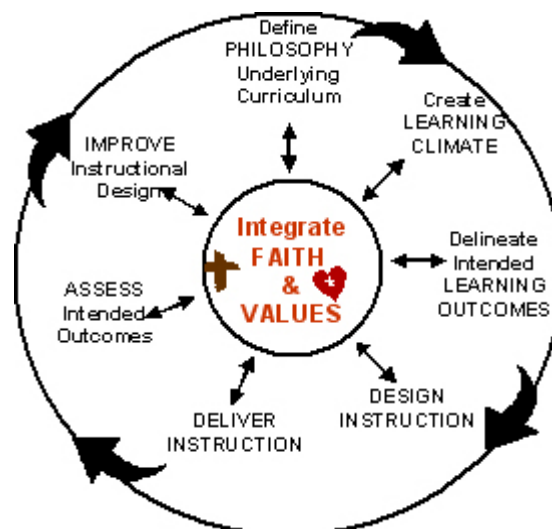
How many times have you asked your child's teacher or school principal: "*What is your curriculum?*" Did they scramble for Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines, State Curriculum Standards, or Parent Student Handbooks? Or did they open the door to their classroom and say: "*Here it is!*"

Obviously, curriculum is not that simple; in truth, it is a combination of all of the above.

When you registered your child(ren) at St. X School, you trusted that each teacher and staff member would embody the mission of the school. The classroom teacher, in particular, was the person you believed would follow carefully the curriculum of the school and/or the (arch)diocese. But what did you mean when you asked to see the curriculum? Is curriculum a course of studies? Is curriculum the textbook series that your school uses? Is curriculum the teacher's own creative strategies to help students learn? Simply stated, curriculum is everything that goes on in the school.

Dr. Gini Shimabukuro, currently Associate Professor of the Department of Catholic Educational Leadership at the University of San Francisco, has done extensive writing and speaking on the topic of curriculum. With her permission, I will share with you a very abbreviated understanding of curriculum in the hope that it will lead to a deeper understanding of curriculum for the sake of your children.

Central to Dr. Shimabukuro's writings is a simple graphic entitled: "**Curriculum Development in the Catholic School.**" It consists of two concentric circles, the interior one labeled: "**Integrate FAITH & VALUES.**" The outer circle consists of arrows pointing from one step in the curriculum development process to the other...and then in turn pointing inward to "*faith and values.*"



This inner circle in what makes the Catholic school “*Catholic*.” Most schools today do a fine job of defining what students need to learn to become successful citizens, in delivering effective instruction, in adequately assessing what students have learned...but it is in the integration of faith and values into every aspect of daily life in the school that defines the school as “*Catholic*.” This is, no doubt, why you chose St. X School for your child.

What does this curriculum look like on a day-to-day basis? What can you expect for your child?

The first step is to: “**Define the philosophy underlying curriculum.**” If curriculum is everything that goes on in the school, everyone in the school, from cafeteria worker to principal to teacher to maintenance person...**everyone** subscribes to teaching as Jesus did...by living the Gospel message. This means, too, that the **parent(s)** of the child shares this philosophy!

The next is to: “**Create the learning climate.**” Children learn best in a safe environment, an environment in which they believed they are loved and valued, an environment in which they feel they can succeed. Everyone in the school, but the teacher in particular, is responsible for creating the learning climate that nurtures the child. And when your child comes home from school, that same nurturing environment must be present as your child completes his/her schoolwork and your child receives renewed encouragement in his/her academic pursuits.

The task of the professional educators is to: “**Delineate learning outcomes.**” This is where we can speak about the written curriculum...and this is where state standards, diocesan guidelines, and textbooks are helpful. The “*faith and values*” aspect, however, is where the Catholic school plays an important role. The school must ask: “*What does the student need to know when he/she graduates?*” That answer must have faith and values woven into academic knowledge and skills; this is how the Catholic school is “*different where it counts.*” This is what you have a right to expect as a parent!

The teacher’s next step is to: “**Design Instruction.**” As a Catholic school educator, your child’s teacher believes that each child is created to be “*special.*” Your child’s teacher then, designs instruction, which best suits the learning style and modality of each student, very much the way in which Jesus adapted His teaching style to his audience.

Your child’s teacher is then ready to: “**Deliver Instruction.**” In delivering instruction, the Catholic schoolteacher exercises the primary role: coaxing, drawing forth, truly “*educating*” each child in a way that Jesus would do. As a parent, you have the right to expect that your child’s teacher has updated him/herself professionally in a manner that assists them to deliver instruction effectively.

Although the next step: “**Assess Intended Outcomes**” is placed almost at the end of the cycle, if the school is truly educating the student for life, this step should probably be woven in and out of delineating learning outcomes, designing instruction, and delivering instruction. Perhaps you may question whether or not your child is being assessed enough or too much. Try to remember that assessment can be as simple as “*kid-watching*” or as involved as standardized testing.

And then the final step: “**Improve Instructional Design.**” Good educators are always looking for ways to improve. Parents who are involved in the life of the school have opportunities to offer constructive feedback on the school’s curriculum.

This brings us back to the inner circle: “**Integrate Faith and Values.**” In a Catholic school, this inner circle is what makes the Catholic school curriculum not only innovative and vibrant, but also faith-filled and transformative for the students. Isn’t this why you chose Catholic education for your child in the first place?

*Sr. Joseph Spring, SCC
Provincial Education Liaison
Sisters of Christian Charity
Mendham NJ*



Easy Fundraising with Great Entertainment

- The Family Entertainment Catalog - your exclusive source for great entertainment (CD's and DVD's)
- 45% of Net Proceeds* go to your school
- No minimum order or upfront inventory to own
- Everything is shipped directly to customers
- Passive fundraising - Shop online anytime at www.thefamilycatalog.com

your group keeps
45%
of Net Proceeds*

*Net Proceeds equals the total amount of the purchase minus shipping and handling fees and any taxes and returns.

Toll-Free 1.888.687.4225

www.thefamilycatalog.com