Curriculum Action Plan:

A Guide to Understanding Curriculum Development

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Curriculum Definition

Curriculum is a cohesive guideline for teachers and staff to define what students are expected to learn and on what timeline, the methods and practices of instruction that facilitate student learning, and the ways in which teachers and the organization determine to what level that knowledge is attained.

Learning Goals

The expansive list of research and initiatives in curriculum is endless. I am confident I could spend years exploring the world of curriculum plans. However, in order to progress into action, it is crucial to set short and long-term goals. The most critical step for me would be to narrow and focus my research. My first goal is to choose a theory or two and research them in depth to expand my understanding of each. Then, because the only way to truly develop an understanding of a curriculum plan is to put it into practice, my next goal will be to implement a plan in some way to test its effectiveness in my classroom. Experience is a key aspect of my learning style, so that must be a portion of my goal. While I may focus on one or two strategies, it will be extremely important for me to continue my research and develop an overall understanding of trends and initiatives in curriculum improvement. Simply remaining open to ideas will be a crucial tactic in furthering my knowledge. To begin, the process of curriculum mapping and the STEM education program sparked inspiration. I would like to further my research on developing this cross-content instruction and at the same time implement that instruction using some 21st Century skills. My first goal will be to map and develop the curriculum of my own classes, with a long-term goal of examining the school-wide curriculum.

Resources

It will be vital to have the support of my administration to achieve my goals. It is also essential to remember that resources are all around me. My classmates, colleagues, and Doane professors will be critical resources for me as I continue my journey in curriculum development. Their knowledge, skill, and experience is invaluable. A copy of the current curriculum for all classes, particularly core subject areas, a copy of the Nebraska state standards, and texts on STEM and 21st Century Skills will also be needed.

Reading

Mapping the Big Picture and Curriculum 21 by Heidi Hayes Jacobs would provide a solid foundation upon which to build my steps. This Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development link has a wealth of resources available online, although some are available only to members. STEM education resources are also available online including a comprehensive understanding at this link called STEM Smart Brief. While it is crucial to gain knowledge and have a solid research base, it is important to make my research goals manageable. Two books and online resources seem like a succinct way to begin.

Outcome

My short term goal of developing the curriculum in my own classroom is clearly an instructional goal. It will be an active participation in the implementation of my own curriculum, instruction and assessment and encourage my development as a teacher and professional while promoting student learning. However, my long-term goal of examining school-wide curriculum development practices might also become an organizational one. It is important that we as a staff understand the existing practices and eventually work together to establish a perspective or policy that facilitates future examination and development of the school's curriculum.

Key Actions

There are several steps needed to complete the development of my current curriculum, beginning with the most basic and working toward an examination of the school's overall curriculum, including:

1. Further my reading and research on STEM, curriculum mapping, and 21st Century Skills until I have a confident understanding of each.
2. Develop a set of two or three specific outcomes or goals for student learning and progress that connect to 21st Century Skills.
3. Using my current curriculum, map a timeline of my instruction and assessment and its connection to the state standards in reading and writing.
4. Using a copy of the social studies, science, and math curriculums, search for alignment in scope and sequence and timeline that might facilitate cross-content activities.
5. Upon discovering a possibility for an activity, discuss and develop the idea with the content area instructor.
6. Develop a Lesson or Unit Plan including timeline and connection to the other content area.
7. Implement that plan during the 2015-2016 school year.
8. Reflect upon and evaluate the success of that plan.
9. Make adjustments and expand to include more STEM education.

Possible Resistance

It is likely an attempt to change curriculum planning may encounter resistance, especially once it progresses to school-wide examination and development. Because it would undoubtedly require time and effort, there may be some resistance from both teachers and administrators. It

will be imperative that I approach the subject from an educational perspective and stress that I would like to increase my understanding of developing curriculum not only for the school's benefit but for my own. It will also be important to demonstrate that I have done preliminary research and put in the time and effort on my own curriculum before I ask my colleagues to do the same. Because I teach at a small school, I am the only English teacher in my grade level. Though I will consult the other teacher in my content area, developing my own curriculum will be a process I can complete individually before collaborating with my colleagues.

Risks

Risk is always a precursor to positive change. There is no question that my first risk will be my time and effort. Because the responsibility of developing the curriculum for my grade levels lies on me, it will be absolutely necessary that I manage my time and resources and complete a good amount of work before the school year begins. As all new instructional plans do, a new unit plan risks failure. However, if I adapt and keep my overall outcomes in mind, there are always new strategies for success. I also risk meeting the previously discussed resistance. However, if I begin with a solid foundation of research, hard work, and preparation, and if I remain humble and flexible, I hope to meet that resistance with the necessary courage to overcome it. Risk is a necessary part of really making a difference.