

HANDBOOK 1: Seeing the Big Picture

CONTENTS	
1. Seeing the Vision.	3
2. Understanding How the Project Will Operate.....	5
3. Initiating the Project	6
4. Understanding the Key Terms.....	8

A Handbook in the Collaboration for Excellence Series
North Dakota Division of Independent Study
Office of Curriculum and Improvement
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction © 2000

This handbook is one of a series published for the project Collaboration for Excellence: The North Dakota Curriculum Project.

The publication is free to public school educators in North Dakota, who may make copies without permission.

These handbooks represent a team product. A major contributor was Ann Clapper, who was previously Director of the Office of Curriculum Leadership and Improvement. Numerous educators in North Dakota reviewed all these materials and made valuable suggestions. Especially helpful were the following North Dakota educators: Janet Edlund, Dakota Prairie High School; Cheryl Kuhas, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction; Karen Nelson, Hettinger; Sandra Willprecht, Forman. Allan A. Glatthorn, Distinguished Research Professor at East Carolina University, served as consultant to the project.

It should be emphasized that the processes suggested here should be seen only as recommendations, not mandates. The authors value the ability of North Dakota educators to develop their own processes that reflect the needs and resources of their schools.

1. SEEING THE VISION

In its quest for curriculum excellence in North Dakota schools, The North Dakota Curriculum Project hopes to achieve the following vision.

Vision of Curriculum Excellence

All North Dakota students are achieving their maximum potential. The teachers are instrumental in this achievement, demonstrating their ability to effectively use a standards-based curriculum and appropriately modify it, responding to the special needs of their students.

Teachers are actively supported by principals who understand and carry out their leadership roles in curriculum. Teachers and principals have strong support from curriculum committees who are planning and producing quality materials, a superintendent and school board who know that their curriculum leadership is crucial, and parents who understand that they are vital factors in the achievement of their sons and daughters.

All schools are embarked upon a continuing journey of school improvement, using an appropriate model of systemic change.

Several elements of this vision need to be emphasized.

- ! **Student learning is central.**
 - " The bottom line is student learning. If quality learning does not result, all the efforts have been futile.
- ! **Teachers make the difference.**
 - " The quality of teaching is the primary determiner.
- ! **Collaboration is vital.**
 - " Teachers cannot do it alone. They need the support of everyone involved.
- ! **Change is a journey towards improvement.**
 - " The best change is systemic.

Developing Your Own Vision

The important issue is **your** vision, not ours. As will be explained more fully in later handbooks, you and your colleagues should develop your own vision of curriculum excellence. There are many possible methods one may use in developing a curricular vision. You should feel free to use any method you wish, so long as it results in a clear explanation of what you and your colleagues want in a quality curriculum. Here is one method for developing a vision.

1. Assemble participants in groups of 5 or 6, at a table.
2. Ask each member to individually complete this statement with 5 adjectives.

“I have a dream of a quality curriculum that is . . .”

Example: integrated

3. Ask for one adjective from each person at a time, using a “round-robin” sequence. List all the adjectives in this fashion until all have been collected.
4. Allow members to ask for clarification of any item.
5. Have each member advocate for one of the adjectives.
6. Have each person vote for the 5 that in his or her view should get the top priority: 5 for the best, 4 for next best, and so on.
7. Tally the votes and list the five with the most votes.
8. Collect the “top-5” lists from each group.
9. Select the top 5 adjectives across all groups. (You may need to go through the voting process again if there are no clear top 5 adjectives.)
10. Assemble a small team of writers and have them complete a sentence for each adjective.

Example: for the integrated adjective above, the editors might write, “We have a dream of a quality curriculum that is integrated, so that the curriculum shows the connections between the various subjects.”

2. UNDERSTANDING HOW THE PROJECT WILL OPERATE

An overall plan for the entire project has been developed (see Display 1-1). This plan draws upon the authors' experience and the literature on the change process. Although the specifics of the plan will vary from time to time, dependent chiefly on the resources needed and the educator input provided, the tentative plan is as follows. Each major step is noted, along with a target date. We should note here that the target dates are provided simply to give users a clear sense of how the project was planned; the dates will surely change as the project moves along.

**Display 1-1
Project Timeline**

TASK	WHEN
1. Sense a need for the project by conferring with North Dakota educators.	Sept-Dec. 1998
2. Develop the knowledge base by reviewing the research and reports of exemplary practice.	Nov. 1998-ongoing
3. Design the framework for the publications.	Jan. 1999
4. Have framework reviewed by administrators and teachers, making modifications as necessary.	March-Aug. 1999
5. Produce the first draft of the publications.	Feb.-Nov. 1999
6. Arrange to have two handbooks evaluated by selected educators, to test a model for reviewing and revising.	Nov. 1999
7. Present initial workshop for district leadership teams, using materials that have been produced by that time.	Feb. 2000
8. Present workshop for school leadership teams.	Mar. 2000
9. Have first drafts of publications reviewed by administrators and teachers, revising as necessary.	Mar. 2000
10. Arrange for computer storage and retrieval of all publications.	May 2000
11. Arrange for printing and dissemination of publications for use in pilot test.	June 2000
12. Arrange for pilot testing in districts and schools of all materials.	June 2000
13. Train personnel at all schools involved in pilot test.	July 2000
14. Conduct pilot test.	Sept.-Dec. 2000
15. Use pilot results to revise and disseminate all materials.	Jan. 2001
16. Implement materials in all schools: September, 2001.	Sept. 2001

3. INITIATING THE PROJECT

As the planning calendar indicates, several preparatory steps were taken to initiate the project.

Sensing the Need and Getting Started

Through discussions with administrators and teachers throughout North Dakota, it became apparent that there was a widespread need for both resource materials and professional workshops that would help administrators and teachers provide a curriculum of excellence for North Dakota schools, using the state standards as a foundation.

The first action to respond to this need was to check out this perception with North Dakota educators, all of whom agreed with this perceived need. The project director then contacted and engaged a consultant, Allan A. Glatthorn. Glatthorn is Distinguished Research Professor at East Carolina University and is an internationally recognized expert in the field of curriculum development. With his assistance a tentative framework for the publications was developed. Several school administrators reviewed the framework; their suggestions were used to improve it.

Building the Knowledge Base

The next preparatory step was to build the knowledge base by reviewing the research on effective curricula, searching for best practices, and drawing upon the experiential knowledge of North Dakota educators. This step helped in broadening the vision and guiding the actions, although two cautions were kept in mind throughout the project. First, the recommendations should draw from the experience and wisdom of the best teachers. To ensure that this was the case, teachers critiqued the materials and added their own ideas. Second, the materials should recognize the uniqueness of the state and its school systems, especially cognizant of the limited resources of small school systems. Reviews by both school administrators and teachers helped to maintain this special focus.

Determining the Design of the Publications and Workshops

At the outset it should be emphasized that the Collaboration for Excellence project includes both publications and professional development workshops. The purpose of the workshops is to enable participants to review and critique the publications and to train leaders in the curriculum development skills they need so that they in turn can train those back home.

The total set of publications includes twelve separate handbooks (see Display 1-2).

Display 1-2

Collaboration for Excellence Handbook Titles

Laying the Foundations

1. Seeing the Big Picture
2. Organizing and Planning for the Curriculum
3. Evaluating the Curriculum
4. Auditing the Curriculum

Providing Leadership

5. Providing Leadership at the District Level
6. Providing Leadership at the School Level
7. Providing Leadership at the Classroom Level

Developing Curriculum Documents

8. Developing Scope and Sequence Charts and Curriculum Guides
9. Developing Long-Term Plans for Teaching
10. Developing Standards-Based Units

Focusing on Results

11. Focusing on Student Learning
 12. Meeting Special Needs
-
-

4. UNDERSTANDING THE KEY TERMS

So that all professionals can communicate more clearly with each other, it seems useful to standardize the curriculum vocabulary. The following terms are used throughout the handbooks and are defined briefly in context.

! **Authentic Learning**

" Learning that involves higher-order thought processes, builds upon a sound and deep knowledge base, and is used in solving complex open-ended problems.

! **Benchmarks**

" Learning outcomes that together constitute a curriculum standard.

! **Citizens Curriculum Advisory Council**

" A representative group from the community who advise on curriculum matters.

! **Classroom Learning Objectives**

" The very specific statements of outcomes derived from the benchmark and intended chiefly to assist teachers in their planning.

! **Curriculum**

" A specification of what is to be taught and learned. Several types of curricula have been identified:

- Recommended - what scholars recommend should be taught
- Written - the written documents from the state, the school district, the school, and the classroom
- Taught - what the teacher teaches
- Learned - what the students learn
- Assessed - the content reflected in examinations and tests of several types
- Supported - the curriculum that appears in texts and other learning resources
- Hidden - what is learned from the policies and procedures of the school
- Excluded - what has been omitted from the curriculum

! **Criterion** (plural: criteria)

" An issue that is used in making an evaluation.

! **Curriculum Coordinating Council**

" A representative group that plans and monitors all curriculum projects for all subjects, for grades K-12.

! **Curriculum Guide**

" A written specification of what is to be taught, typically produced by the school system.

! **Curriculum Standard** (sometimes called a standard or a content standard)

" A set of statements that explain what should be learned by the end of a grade level, in one subject.

! Opportunity Standard

" A statement of the opportunities for learning that should be provided if students are to achieve the performance standard, such as having access to quality materials.

! Performance Assessment

" An evaluation of student learning that requires the student to demonstrate or prove what has been learned – or alternatively, how well the student has performed on a performance task.

! Performance Standard

" A specification of what constitutes satisfactory performance.

! Performance Task

" A complex open-ended problem that requires the student to apply knowledge in solving the problem.

! Rubrics

" A scoring guide that indicates the criteria to be used and the several levels of performance and their characteristics.

! Scope and Sequence Chart

" A large chart that shows the standards down the left side and the grades or levels across the top. Appropriate benchmarks are shown in the cells.

! Subject Area Committee

" A representative group appointed by the Curriculum Planning council to develop a Scope and Sequence Chart and a Curriculum Guide, for one subject, grades K-12.