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Developing Your Own Unique Curriculum

II Timothy 3:14-4:2

“What should every graduate of our school be able to know and do?” is a question to be searched out by every school, “once and for all” and on a continuing basis. Each local school works out its own curriculum with “fear and trembling,” knowing its individual responsibility (Mt. 18:6; Rom. 14:12), intent on serving God in its own location (Job 2:11) and generation (Acts 13:36).

If “all truth is God’s truth” (Col. 2:3), if it is the responsibility of the church to be “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15), if each church has its own local autonomy (responsibility), if some matters are “weightier” than others (Mt. 23:23), then it is the responsibility of each local church to identify what is essential to teach its students to observe (Mt.28:20). Also, if the pastor is the overseer of the local assembly and responsible for the fountainhead of truth nourishing that congregation (i.e., the pulpit), then the pastor has a significant role in the identification, propagation, and maintenance of that body of truth which is essential! Furthermore, if parents have the responsibility of bringing up their children in the nurture (skills/habits) and admonition (content/knowledge) of the Lord (Eph. 6:4), then it also is the responsibility of those parents to determine what those skills (process) and knowledge (content) are to be.

When a doctoral candidate begins working on his dissertation, he must first “review the literature” to identify the best available knowledge in the area of his subject. So, too, a school must “review the literature” as it identifies what each child must know (content) and be able to do (process) upon graduation.

What “literature” needs reviewed? Where does one begin? Why not simply take a respected, professionally prepared curriculum, rather than “reinventing the wheel?”

In reviewing the literature, one begins with the Bible and prayer, listing those parameters and specifics that come to his mind. Next, he could look at the scopes and sequences available from various professional Christian curriculum developers. Reviewing one’s state’s expectations is appropriate, and, certainly, it would be essential to study the results of the AACCS compilation of academic objectives completed recently.

There are numerous advantages in identifying and then making known these essentials. One advantage of posting your school’s unique curriculum objectives is that such posting allows your whole world to suggest additions and corrections. Another advantage is for parents to get more involved in specific drills and studies apart from the compartmentalization that is going on in the school. Having an overview of the curriculum all in one place motivates in itself (Cf. R.A.Torrey’s Synthetic Bible Studies).

A separate, but related, issue is that many college students flounder because they enter college without any vocational direction, with “no clue” of what to do! For every high school graduate to leave high school with at least some tentative sense of the Lord’s leading along with the knowledge that his parents and local church are behind him, could be part of a school’s curriculum development.

Included with this presentation is a sample “Essentials of Knowledge” booklet that illustrates one school’s pursuit of curriculum development. Please come prepared to hear and give answers to the following questions!

1. What should every child know and be able to do upon graduation from high school?

What should every child know and be able to do upon completion of middle school, elementary, primary, kindergarten, and pre-school (and college)? (What are the specific contents and processes?)

2. What is the role of professional curriculum developers in identifying specific content and skills for specific schools?
3. What is the role of the pastor in identifying and advancing specific graduation objectives of the Christian school?
4. What is the role of the state (through mandate or indirect influence), the parents, or the university in determining graduation (and intermediate) outcomes?
5. What is the role of the state (and national) Christian school associations in stirring pastors and local churches to their responsibilities?
6. What kind of Bible content and skill mastery should we expect of our graduates?
7. What kind of Christlikeness (Christian character) should the school expect its graduates to demonstrate before graduating them? (Consider “work ethic.”)

Bonus Questions!

- a. Are there any books that are essential for our students to have read upon graduation; and, if so, what are they?
- b. What other steps could be taken in the development of a unique Christian school curriculum? [1. Pray 2. Search the scripture 3. Write out your own 4. Review the literature 5. Rewrite]
- c. What is the role of the school (church) in sending out students with some sense of vocational direction?
- d. With what kind of respect for their parents and local church leaders should students leave high school relative to the respect that they will hold for their college professors?