REFLECTIONS ON TEACHER PRACTICE 2.2

The Curriculum

1. How can teachers emphasize both breadth and depth when teaching the required school curriculum? Why are both breadth and depth needed for understanding?

2. How can teachers planning and teaching as a team result in more effective teaching? How would such teaming make schools more of a challenge for students?

I find it very difficult to “cover” my curriculum by myself, but with the cooperation of other teachers (not just core teachers), I am able to cover and practice much more. We often think of related arts classes as being nonacademic, but they are only nonacademic if we teach them that way.

The science teacher on my team has partnered with the FACS teacher on the human body, hygiene, and rocks/fossils/minerals content very successfully. Likewise, the science teacher on my team is having her students reply to response-like questions in the same way I have been requiring them to answer in my classroom. We are already making plans for next year’s first quarter to be sure our students are able to take notes and present research effectively as well as other overlapping skills.

We need more time to plan together as well as the openness of others to include/hook into each others’ subject concepts. It takes time to see the connections, but it is vital if we are ever to live up to the grand expectations of those who write our curriculum.

Breadth is wonderful, but not if it is at the expense of understanding and deep knowledge.

—ELLEN, middle school teacher

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ON YOUR OWN 2.3 Reflections on Teacher Practice

Read and reflect on the viewpoints expressed in The Curriculum. Log on to the Web-based student study site at http://www.sagepub.com/eis2study/ and react to the related activities.

Technology in the Classroom

Technology is evolving at an astonishing rate. There is growing consensus that today’s technologies possess incredible potential to improve and even revolutionize our schools. As such, technology literacy must be integrated into the school curriculum. To explore the competencies associated with technology literacy, complete Web Link 2.4: Technology Literacy.

WEB LINK 2.4 Technology Literacy

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has created six broad categories of standards for technological literacy. These standards can be accessed at http://www.iste.org. Many teacher education programs and school districts have adopted these standards for prospective teachers and students. Download and review the standards. Do you think it is realistic for all prospective teachers and students to meet the ISTE standards? Discuss your reflections with classmates.

Most students now have access to computers and the Internet in their classrooms, nearly all students have access somewhere in their schools, and a majority of teachers report using computers or the Internet for instructional purposes. Technology is changing the way teachers teach and students learn. It
is also offering new ways for all involved in education to be openly accountable to parents, communities,
and students. Children have grown up with technology. They have been raised in a world of instant
access to information, a world where vivid images embody and supplement information formerly pre-
sented solely through text. They are used to an environment where they control information flow and
access, whether through toys or a video game controller, remote control, mouse, or touch-tone phone.

The most dramatic area of technology growth has occurred in the use of computers. The decreasing
and increasing availability of microcomputers and other technologies in schools have led
educators to become more interested in technology, particularly as a means of meeting students’
diverse needs. Technology, particularly computers, is being viewed as an essential part of instruction
to help students develop basic and critical thinking skills.

Instructional use of computers varies from helping students learn basic facts to teaching them
complex thinking strategies. Their value to students along the learning continuum from disabled to
gifted and talented comes from their ability to adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of students.

The idea behind computer-based instruction (CBI) is to use the computer as a tutor to
present information, give students practice, and assess their level of understanding. CBI programs
generally share the following characteristics: (a) using a structured curriculum; (b) letting students
work at their own pace; (c) giving students controlled, frequent feedback and reinforcement; and
(d) measuring performance quickly and giving students information on their performance.

The benefits derived from the classroom use of technology remain mixed. Review of 133 research stud-
ies on educational technology from 1990 to 1994 showed that technology had a significant positive impact
on achievement in all subject areas, across all school levels, and in regular classrooms as well as those for
special-needs students (Healy, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Cuban, 1998). Other studies have varied the benefits
derived from using word processing, the Internet, and other classroom technology (Aviram, 2000; Lewin,
2001; Linn & Slotta, 2000). However, other critics (Becher & Ravitz, 2001; Cuban, 2001; Green, 1999;
Salpeter, 2000) claim that technology is having little impact on classroom learning. Clearly, more research
is needed on the impact of technology on student learning (Becher & Ravitz, 2001; Cuban, 2001).

Most teachers also use computers to enhance instruction. Word processing is the most common
instructional use of computers by teachers. Teachers can create handouts for students, write letters to
parents, and respond to administrators’ requests for information. Computers are also commonly used
for recordkeeping, creating grade books, and storing standardized test results and lesson plans. Most
teachers also use computer technology for communicating via e-mail, generating exams for students,
and using the Internet as a resource for lesson planning.

Although computers are one of the most important technological advances, technology actually
includes much more than this. Technology in the classroom makes possible the instant exchange of infor-
mation between classrooms as well as individual students; it allows instant access to databases and online
information services and provides multimedia technical resources such as interactive audio and video.
Technology also allows for the repurposing of preexisting educational materials across media formats:
Print, static illustrations, still and digital photographs, digital audio, still and motion video, still and motion
film, animations, computer graphics, and hypermedia can all be accessed and combined in novel ways.

To incorporate technology more fully into the classroom, teachers must be provided with the time and
support to explore technology on their own. Administrators must provide the time for teachers, who now
suffer from larger classes and more responsibility than ever, to take a break from teaching to start learning.

Whatever the format, technology has a motivating quality for students. They often work longer and
harder than they would with comparable paper-and-pencil tasks. Complete the Web Link 2.5: Computers
in the Classroom. It should generate an array of potential computer activities for your classroom.

**APPLY AND REFLECT 2.10**

Are you technology literate? What are your strengths and weaknesses relative to
technology?
Web Link 2.5 Computers in the Classroom

Browse the World Wide Web to locate examples of K–12 uses of computers in the classroom. What types of activities are the most common? Discuss the benefits gained from your findings. Include benefits to students and teachers.

This completes our study of planning courses and the use of technology in the classroom. Review the planning and technology topics in Table 2.3 and complete Review and Reflective Exercise 2.2 to explore related concepts.

On Your Own 2.4 View From the Classroom

Log on to the Web-based student study site at http://www.sagepub.com/eis2study/. Review the Chapter 2 teacher surveys and react to the related activities.

Table 2.3 Classroom Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course planning</td>
<td>Establishing the curriculum and instructional emphasis of a course for a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural classroom</td>
<td>Valuing the ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity of cultural groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
<td>Modifying instruction in the classroom to reflect the different abilities of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Using multimedia in the classroom to enhance instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Review and Reflective Exercise 2.2 Outline the process you would follow and the issues you would address in designing a course.

Review

- What is involved in planning a course for a year?
- How do cultural differences affect teaching and learning?
- How has the increased emphasis on diversity issues affected school curricula?
- What is the impact of technology on teaching and learning?

Reflection

- How important is it to plan a course for the year? Can’t you just adopt and follow a good textbook for your course plan? What problems could develop if you covered only the content in the adopted textbook?
- There has been much debate in the media over possible bias in the school curriculum. What can you as a teacher do to reduce or eliminate school curriculum bias and its effects?
- What are the strengths and limitations of technology in individual classrooms? Should classroom computers be connected to the Internet?