

From Good Intent to Rigorous Implementation East Sussex Curriculum Conference

A summary of the Curriculum workshop delivered at Wellshurst, 3rd March 2020

3rd March 2020,

David Brunson, Uckfield College

SESSION OVERVIEW and OBJECTIVES

The session seeks to explore four main parts of our journey moving from good intent to rigorous implementation.

Influences how my context, background, experiences, awareness shapes our curriculum choices

Intent how we have framed our curriculum intent, from taglines to student-friendly intentions for learning

Implementation the practical process of putting this into action

Innovations what strategies have evolved and developed over time

BEING THE CURRICULUM CURATOR

The way that we frame curriculum is always going to have a basis on our own conditions - where do we teach, who do we teach, what have we taught before etc. I consider curriculum design like being a curator of an art gallery:

- I need to use the collection of art / objects / pieces at my disposal but can also bring in some exciting new works. The ability to borrow / to acquire new collections.
- I cannot possibly have on display everything that is available so I make selective choices and seek to revisit, amend and revise this as there are more resources, ideas and collections that are available than there can possibly be time to use in the main galleries of our curriculum offer.

As curators we seek to tell a story - our narrative. We needed to think carefully about our narrative - what did we want students to know / to take away / to acquire and to be exposed to before they either no longer pursued History? For us at the end of Year 8, or at the end of Year 11, or at the end of Year 13. *What would have resonance?* What experiences would feed their long term memory and help them make links later in life to the place they were visiting, the institution they might be working for, or the family history they later uncovered?

As a curriculum lead I have had various freedoms:

- Freedom over exam board selection.
- Freedom within the non-compulsory elements of the National Curriculum.
- Freedom to execute the most effective and challenging History curriculum in line with the school's teaching and learning policy.

What were our considerations for INTENT?

1. The uniqueness of the subject discipline
2. The requirements already established nationally
3. The developments within the subject area
4. The specialist knowledge that unlocks the subject
5. The practicalities, timing and availabilities of resources
6. The balance of need
7. The balance of accessibility and challenge
8. The desire to leave a lasting legacy and terms of reference - impacting the long term memory of students
9. The value of originality against not pursuing different approaches for its own sake
10. The need to build within a school curriculum framework

We then worked on the development of a core intent:

INVESTIGATE. ARGUE. JUDGE.

We use this to represent our core purposes, the features of our enquiries and to shape the role of a student historian in our disciplinary process.

The journey we embarked upon had periods of great speed and evolution and also gentle, quiet, slow change. I think that is healthy and good. We needed to change some things quickly - we needed balance, we needed to fulfil parts of our intent that were lacking or underplayed.

Other parts of the curriculum offer have been a very slow evolution of change - a lesson focus changing, a replacement of one lesson with another, an extra lesson added in to reinforce and extend a concept etc.. In our curriculum, we place a spotlight on certain schemes of learning for evolution, we amend the lesson collaboratively or share an alternative starter, main activity or improve access to the enquiry further as we identify the needs of our learners further.

Tim Oates suggested curriculum has multiple meanings:

- **The Intended curriculum** - the required knowledge, skills and understanding that might be written down in the unit of study
- **Enacted curriculum** - the curriculum that students actually experience as delivered, deploying their teachers' unique combinations of learning and resources
- **Assessed curriculum** - the knowledge, skills and understanding students encounter in their assessments
- **Learned curriculum** - the knowledge, skills and understanding that students are left with (unique to each student in each class)

The craft of curriculum design is about the skill in curation, born out of precise intent.

Effective curation and selection will enable implementation and measurable impacts.

Our KS3 units range from 4 lessons long to 16 lessons long. They are uneven. They do not balance. They do not try to. Some units have one single overarching question, others have three. Some lessons are independent, most are joined and connected to others. Some lessons seek to review. Other lessons introduce new content, others support and develop previous material explicitly.

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An inherited curriculum tends to be:

- Known
- Resourced
- Planned
- Meeting needs

A new curriculum can be (but is not always)

- Unknown
- Lacking resources
- Unplanned
- Meeting needs

For our GCSE considerations we wrestled with the following questions:

- What hasn't been working? Ideally, what would our curriculum look like?
- Which topics, with respect to knowledge and skills, are best placed for Year 9 to tackle and be successful with?
- How can we plan a curriculum that would provide sufficient practice of skills elements?
- When would be the best time to conduct formal assessments that test prior knowledge and skills?
- How do we avoid Year 9 material being either a platform/consolidation year or a year of vital content that may feel too far removed from Year 11 terminal exams?
- How can we use spaced practice to improve memory retention?
- How do we devise a curriculum that can deal, at least in part, with a Year 9 students' summer arrival?
- What is our most challenging and inaccessible content? How do we balance getting students to tackle this early to practice and reinforce it, with delaying its introduction until confidence is higher and students are more equipped to deal with it?
- How can we ensure the curriculum is sufficiently consistent so as to smoothly deal with changes in staffing over three years?
- What areas of the curriculum are "ready to go" and which need considerable department planning and collaboration to really execute at the highest level?
- When and how will we next review the plan?

We have also since then made use of Dylan Williams 7 principles of curriculum design to shape and review our intent and implementation.

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND DESIGNING

For our planning of the GCSE curriculum, we used T-cards to visually map out the process and collaboratively make decisions.

Using T-cards enabled us to:

- Move topics
- Make links
- Establish assessments
- See balance and coherence
- Provoke debate between colleagues
- Enable review lessons, opportunities to pause and review material carefully

We used research informed strategies to consider the way we revisited material, spaced learning and built in opportunities for assessment and retrieval.

How did we ensure that the intended curriculum became the enacted curriculum?

THREE YEAR to TWO YEAR GCSE curriculum.

We wanted to ensure nothing was lost...

- Establishing our REVIEW, SUPPORT, EXTEND model
- Continuing with strong contact hours over KS3
- Meeting all components of the National Curriculum fully
- Editing and scrutinising the value, purpose and intent of every component

Effective curriculum is of course always a continual work in progress. We are continually reviewing, amending, improving and assessing to re-assess the impact of this approach. We share resources collaboratively at all stages.

We try to ensure sufficient rigour and consistency in the core material so that students have the same entitlement to our curriculum across the Department, yet maintaining the ability for practitioners to enact the curriculum to the needs of their learners.