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INTRODUCTION

To the young mind every thing is individual, stands by itself. By and by, it finds how to join two things and see in them one nature; then three, then three thousand; and so, tyrannised over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running underground whereby contrary and remote things cohere and flower out from one stem... The astronomer discovers that geometry, a pure abstraction of the human mind, is the measure of planetary motion. The chemist finds proportions and intelligible method throughout matter; and science is nothing but the finding of analogy, identity, in the most remote parts.—Emerson

What Is This Book All About?

To help the “young mind...[discover] roots running under ground whereby contrary and remote things cohere and flower out from one stem” is at once the mission of the teacher and of the learner. To that end, this first book in *The Mindful School* series presents models to connect and integrate the curricula.

What does “integrating the curricula” mean? Does it mean sifting out the parcels of each overloaded discipline and focusing on the priorities in depth? . . . (Fragmented)

Does it mean integrating or connecting yesterday’s lesson to today’s topic? Or relating all issues studied in the science class to the concept of evolution in biology? Or does it mean integrating threads such as “power” and “isolation” woven throughout the Social Studies topics? . . . (Connected)

Does it mean targeting multidimensional skills and concepts within one lesson? . . . (Nested)

Does it mean rearranging the sequence of when a topic is taught to coincide with a parallel topic in another content? . . . (Sequenced)

Does it mean integrating one subject with another through the learner’s conceptual eye? . . . (Shared)

Does it mean selecting an overall theme (such as “persistence” or “argument,” or a topic as familiar as “transportation”) and using a thematic umbrella across all disciplines? Or selecting a book or era or artist and weaving the fabric of the disciplines into that selected context? . . . (Webbed)

Does it mean integrating the content of what is taught with cognitive tools and co-operative strategies that cross disciplines and spill into life situations? . . . (Threaded)

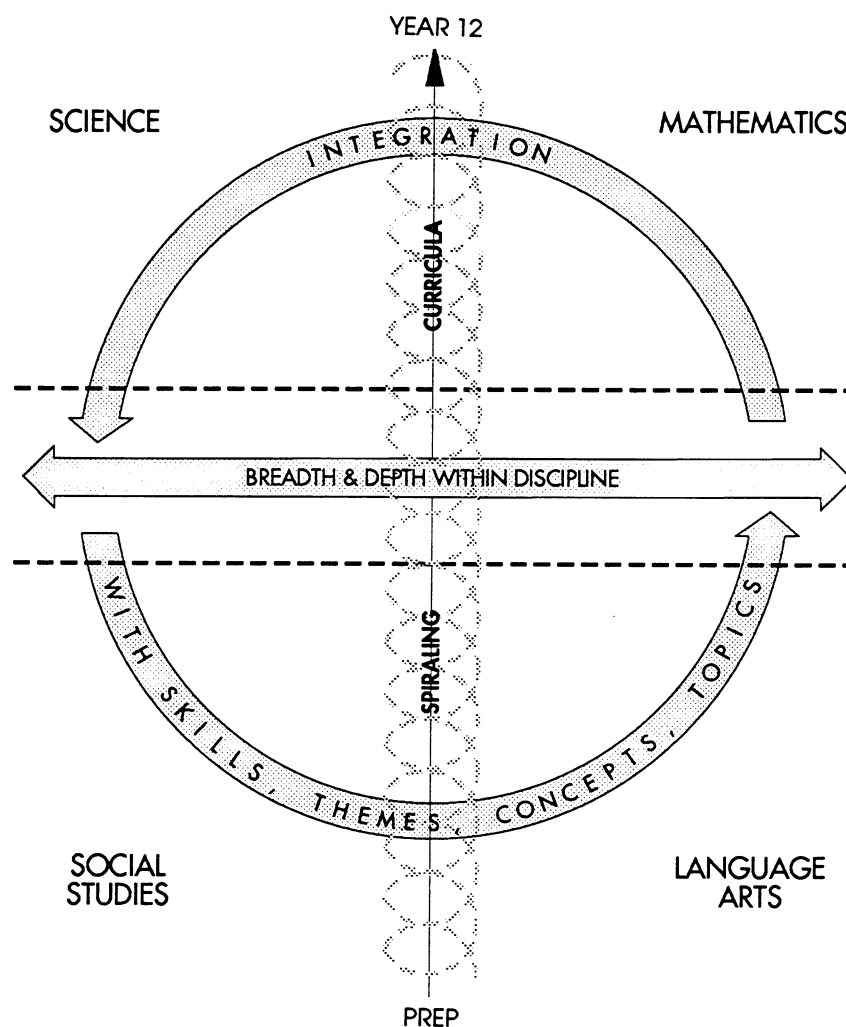
Does integrating the curricula encompass interdisciplinary team planning in which conceptual overlaps become the common focus across departments? . . . (Integrated)

Does it mean integrative threads within the learner him or herself that connect past experiences and prior knowledge with new information and novel experiences? . . . (Immersed)

Does it mean reaching out to build bonds with other experts through networking? . . . (Networked)

The answer, of course, is that integrating the curricula can be any or all (and more) of the aforementioned models. Each teacher and each learner views the integration process differently. Yet, there is a common vision encompassing three distinct dimensions that is commonly accepted.

INTRODUCTION



HOW TO INTEGRATE CURRICULA: THREE DIMENSIONS

The vertical spiral represents the “spiralling” curricula built into most text materials as content is integrated and revisited through the P-12. Mastery of certain material is expected at each level in preparation for “building on to that for the next concepts,” at subsequent levels. Integration occurs vertically throughout the schooling years.

The horizontal band represents the breadth and depth of learning in a given subject. As different subjects are approached, explored, and learned *within* each discipline, a cumulative effect is anticipated. Students are to expand their conceptual bases for future learning in related fields: one maths concept builds toward the next as ideas are integrated within a discipline.

Finally, the circle represents the integration of skills, themes, concepts, and topics *across* disciplines as similarities are noted. These explicit connections are used to enhance the learning in a holistic manner as students link ideas from one subject to ideas in another subject.