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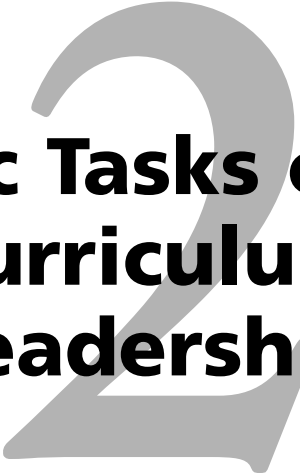
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Defining Effective Curriculum Leadership



Curriculum leadership in schools is pretty much what the individual leader makes it. There are many tasks associated with the curriculum development process and the leader is professionally responsible for sorting out and prioritizing this work. I strongly believe that curriculum leadership must be more than the management of existing programs. A curriculum manager would focus on reviewing materials, control issues, daily problem-solving, and encouraging a predictable routine from year to year. Such an orientation to the job is static. Effective curriculum leadership does all of those things plus establish new direction, align people and resources, motivate participants, and produce meaningful change for school improvement. In short, effective curriculum leadership is more than maintenance, it is dynamic in nature.

This distinction between just “running smoothly” and “responding to change” is very important on the job and reflects the general orientation (or philosophy) of the curriculum leader. The reader must ask, “Are we operating in a static world where schools are unchanging, or are we living in a dynamic world in which significant change is ever present?” The worldview of the school curriculum leader, static or dynamic, will determine what is considered a priority on a daily basis.



Basic Tasks of Curriculum Leadership

Curriculum work in schools is central to all other leadership activity. The curriculum defines school schedules, whether to place teachers in teams or within departments, and even the kind of instructional resources needed in the classrooms. The overall curriculum design determines what is to be a part of that plan, and what is not, and the planned curriculum generally provides order to all of the parts of the program. The curriculum can be thought of as a master blueprint for student learning at the school.

As noted, curriculum leadership consists of both maintenance and improvement of a school program. In a sense, school leaders dealing with curriculum matters are like both educational architects and engineers. A long history of education provides a basic set of tasks for learning, all of which are common to students in every school. Changing conditions in the environment, however, require constant redesign efforts if the schools are to remain relevant and fill student needs effectively.

In this chapter, we will look at four basic tasks of curriculum leadership in schools: defining purpose, collaborating for success, providing the path to follow, and coordinating activity for the attainment of the desired ends. Later chapters will fill in the details of these four tasks and help the reader explore how curriculum activities define each of these important functions. Let's get started!