Curriculum Evaluation

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Curriculum Evaluation is the process of evaluating material to ensure that all standards are being addressed. This process allows the evaluation team to determine if the curriculum in question will fit the needs of their students and the educational needs of the district. Many steps must be taken throughout the process to ensure that every aspect of the material will fit these needs. The steps include how to choose a curriculum, how the curriculum incorporates the standards, and which data will or should be collected and presented to show the benefits of the curriculum that are most beneficial.

Curriculum evaluation begins with choosing material that will be used in teaching and educating the students in the district. This will hold educators and students accountable (Hewitt, 2006). It is important to research ways that the curriculum will be engaging to the students. This will help with retention and growth of all students. One thought to keep in mind is that school should engage students with the curriculum they will be learning (316). Curriculum accountability is when school professionals accurately determine and report everything about the curriculum, and its student outcomes. This expression exemplifies how standards, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and evaluation all work together intermittently.

Curriculum review in curriculum in the process is taking the current program and looking at the pros and cons (Hewitt 2006). When considering a curriculum change, this allows the team to evaluate whether the current text is successful or not. A positive starting point is to identify what is to be evaluated and its objectives about learning (322). These objectives start as a guideline and are later incorporated in the analysis of the overall program. The objectives should include many characteristics such as behavioral, instructional, or performance objectives which are intended to describe any observable behaviors within the learning environment. These

objectives have specifications for specific performance tasks, state which measurements will be observed, how they will be observed, and reported. After the objectives have been considered the team will then decide whether it will be beneficial to implement a curriculum change.

When implementing a curriculum change many factors are considered, such as who will be using the curriculum, in what ways the curriculum will be utilized, and how it will align with the scope and sequence of the district, state, and national standards (Hewitt, 2006). This type of accountability is a process that is ongoing through every part of the long-term plan. Long-term planning helps with the implementation process later when a curriculum has been selected.

The curriculum appraisal process is extensive and may take several days, months, or even years (Hewitt, 2006). As the teacher or practitioner, it is imperative that it is understood that the program promotes learning, which is the sole purpose of a school. A good way to think of this process is as a form of curriculum appraisal. Using a series of questions, criteria, and data the appraisal will provide careful and thoughtful considerations for the curriculum, along with specific objectives. The primary focus will be the fundamentals of the curriculum: the scope and sequence, balance, broad or narrow contexts, and continuity from one level to the next. Curriculum appraisal offers ways to consider accountability, curriculum, and evaluation as emerging parts of the process.

As the evaluation process continues, there are several models that can be utilized to help make this process less pain staking (Hewitt, 2006). The variations in different models will lead to bountiful results in the evaluation process. It is recommended that several thresholds are considered: 1) knowing that the purpose will vary, 2) devise an evaluation model that is the most appropriate, 3) have a strong sense of what is to be evaluated (331). Evaluation uses processes which are made up of techniques or methods.

The systematic approach in curriculum evaluation is a very successful approach which utilizes five phases, this system enhances an evaluations projected credibility (Jason, 2008). The phases provide several sources of data which allows for accurate judgement of the effectiveness and efficacy. After a program has been selected, then the five phases begin.

Describing the program is the first phase of the process by writing a description of the program that is to be evaluated (Jason, 2008). The data in this process is collected through interviews of the program staff to collect the necessary information that would describe the program and its components. The description in this phase includes many components of information that will help the entire team see the whole picture. Components include an overview of the program, program goals and objectives, program operations (selection of participants, characteristics of participants, instruction activities, program personnel, management activities, material resources, schedule, and the financial requirement to successful implementation of the program) (78). The program overview also contains the evaluation questions which the curriculum will need to answer upon completion of the evaluation process.

As phase one is completed, next is phase two- providing direction for the evaluation (Jason, 2008). The questions that are developed in phase one in the overview serve as a framework in facilitating how the report of the study is organized. Each question is designed to collect data related to the achievement of program outcomes, with the intent to elevate the program. Questions should be used that are objective rather than subjective, questioning concerns that may occur within the outcomes that were not originally anticipated. An example of this is when positive outcomes presented themselves that were not originally outlined in the programs goal statements. However, negative outcomes may also present themselves, allowing room for suggestion toward the improvement of the program (81). With these considerations the

evaluation team must be mindful whether or not the program may cost extra time or money upon implementation, creating a cost-benefit, or cost-effectiveness analysis. After the evaluation questions have been formulated, they must be distributed to stakeholders (non-school personnel). This provides an explanation of the purposes of the curriculum, and the questions that were used. This will help foster an understanding of the data and the evaluation questions towards the programs efficiency and efficacy. Once the stakeholders have a full understanding of the program and its purpose, then the final questions are selected. This phase is extensive and may have to be revisited several times. The questions lead to the collection of data which answers the evaluation questions.

Obtaining information to answer the evaluation questions- phase three, is the start of the data collection process (Jason, 2008). In the beginning of this phase a control group is selected, which will is used to compare the programs being assessed (keep in mind that a control group is not a requirement if the population is extremely small). If the population is too small, sampling can be used, which is the selection of a percentage or number of subjects (87). The process of sampling is calculated randomly so that there are no biases present in the data. As the groups are selected it is important to communicate all important and sharable questionnaires, data, objectives, and any other information to parents, administration, stakeholders, and other members. This communication may also bring in pertinent information or other important questions, opinions, feelings, beliefs, and concerns towards the program. Teachers may be given a program needs assessment to ensure that as the process is being completed, their opinions, concerns, and feelings are considered and calculated into the data of the program, with ethical and professional considerations.

After all the data has been collected and compiled, an analysis is necessary (James, 2008). Phase four- analyzing data to assess a program's impact is taking the data and analyzing that data through numerous approaches (111). There are two forms of analysis that will take place. First, is the quantitative data analysis which will provide an objective look at the data assessing the program's impact, and weighing the outcomes of the program, showing the possible gains or losses of the program. Any data from students, teachers, evaluators, administration, and stakeholders is taken into consideration, compiled, and organized meticulously. All data is displayed in tables, graphs, charts, and even quotes. These forms of data will help demonstrate the effectiveness and efficacy of the program. When the evaluation team has processed the data, they will determine whether the program will fulfill the needs of the school or district. As they move to phase five- evaluating the program's effectiveness and offering recommendation for its future.

As the team moves into phase five- evaluating the program's effectiveness and offering recommendation for its future, they interpret their data, and organize the information and create a formal recommendation presenting the facts of the data collected. This data is presented in phase six- writing the evaluation report (Jason, 2008). The evaluation team draws their conclusion based on professional judgement and statistical evidence. The recommendation will have taken the program's context and efficiency into consideration, demonstrating their professional recommendation towards the program. With the development of the evaluation the team will complete the final step and formulate the evaluation report.

The evaluation report is a formal document stating the recommendation, the data, and the findings of the evaluation (Jason, 2008). This report is published and distributed to the appropriate parents, students, stakeholders, and even the public. This report communicates the

ways that the program was evaluated and how the program will be implemented into the school

or district. The report is a summary of the extensive formal curriculum evaluation.

References

Hewitt, T. W. (2006). *Understanding and shaping curriculum: What we teach and why*. Sage

    Publications.

Jason, M. H. (2008). *Evaluating programs to increase student achievement*. Corwin.