



**Resource for Curriculum Development
and Review**

Introduction: The purpose of this document is to help schools that are new to curriculum writing and provide schools with ideas for how to begin the curriculum documentation process and how to develop or refine a curriculum review process. For a review of required curriculum elements and curriculum documentation, see Appendix B in the [Inspire Standards Manual](#) entitled *Curriculum Documentation Requirements*.

Getting Started: Some schools are just at the beginning stages of this process and need direction on how to develop their curriculum beyond using the table of contents of their textbooks. Moving beyond this, formal curriculum documentation better reflects who the school is, how that is reflected in the instructional plan, and what they are actually teaching. Schools that find themselves at this stage might be asking, "Where do I begin?"

1. We suggest that you have an overall **Christian philosophy of education** that your whole faculty understands and generally agrees with. This is important because the biblical basis for each course must build on an overall philosophy of education; otherwise, these individual courses may not complement one another and build toward a coherent whole. Thinking through and establishing a Christian philosophy of education for your school (though not a required document for accreditation) is an excellent activity to start the process of developing your curriculum documents.
2. The **biblical basis for your courses** should be developed by department and could answer the question 'why would this subject be taught in a Christian school?' This could be quick and should probably produce a document no longer than a half page long.
3. Next, design a basic **model/template for the course documentation** that everyone (all grade levels and subject areas) is going to use (whether that is in an electronic mapping system or other format) including identical headers/titles of content. Once the model or template is chosen, determine the strategic plan for data and information to be entered into the template so that it is an attainable process, completed systematically. See ACSI's curriculum documentation requirements in Appendix B of the [Inspire Standards Manual](#).
4. Another tip for success is to identify and train one or two teachers to be the **"Go-To" people** at each level. If there is an elementary, middle school, and high school person who can help with the detailed questions, schools have found that delays are less likely, work keeps moving forward, and that this can provide greater accountability.
5. Provide occasional work time and hold staff to manageable deadlines. **It is important to note that even after the foundational curriculum documentation is in place, curriculum development is an ongoing process, continually being updated, revised, and improved as teachers utilize the documents each year.**

Curriculum Review Process (Indicator 8.3)

Schools usually have a **textbook review cycle** that shows which year each subject area will undergo a review of the textbook(s). That is not the same as a **curriculum review process**, but it is one important piece of the process. According to the textbook review cycle, subject areas will usually be up for review every five to seven years.

The following is a brief look at what could be in a **curriculum review process**. The process at your school might not look exactly like this, but it would likely cover these areas.

1. **Establish a curriculum review committee** composed of teachers who are most involved in teaching the subject area. It should include a representative from each division the school offers, an administrator, and a curriculum specialist (if that is a separate position).
2. **Complete a needs assessment** of how the past five to seven years have gone with the current curriculum as written, the resources that were used, and any other factors that may have influenced that subject area's success. Some of the questions for the needs assessment could be:
 - a. How did the teaching of this subject contribute to the overall goals or student outcomes of the school?
 - b. What do trends in data (including standardized or departmental assessments) tell us about how well content are standards were accomplished? Are there any gaps or overlaps of content? Are there any other types of assessments to consider?
 - c. Have there been any changes in state, national, or other standards that would impact our revision of the curriculum?
 - d. Are there accreditation standards or recommendations that would impact our revision of the curriculum?
 - e. Are there any teaching techniques that would enhance critical thinking or student engagement that would impact our revision of the curriculum?
 - f. Are there individual student needs that impact our teaching of this subject?
 - g. Has anything changed in society; technology; our physical environment; or the spiritual, social, emotional, or academic needs of students that would impact our revision of the curriculum?
 - h. Are there additional or more challenging ways in which we can encourage biblical or interdisciplinary integration as we revise this curriculum?
3. **Establish collaborative committee** with representatives from each division to determine necessary adjustments to the curriculum documentation. Once approved, the committee develops a revised scope and sequence and adjusts the overall curriculum as needed. The basic adjustments to consider could include:
 - a. Philosophy changes
 - b. Overall goals/objectives for the various grade levels
 - c. Content to be included, especially new/changed
 - d. Skills, especially new/changed
 - e. Biblical concepts/essential questions (unit level concepts)
 - f. Resources, especially new/changed
 - g. Timeframes, especially if the needs assessment suggested need for more or less of something
 - h. New courses needed to meet the objectives of the curriculum changes being recommended
4. Once the basic parameters are decided upon by the larger group, it is time to discuss textbook adoption. A general discussion should cover the parameters the team agrees on and could include factors such as:
 - a. Christian, secular, or either (with a review for worldview elements)
 - b. Pedagogy, or approaches such as "Literature-based Language Arts"
 - c. Standards-based, and which standards
 - d. Cost (are materials all included, or available for purchase)
 - e. Quality (durable, attractive, etc.)
 - f. Additional materials, online or other technology support
 - g. Teacher support materials (reteaching, assessments, etc.)
 - h. Multiple levels, or other special needs and differentiation support materials

- i. Compatibility with other instructional materials (fits scope and sequence, levels above and below, additional programs being offered at the school)
 - j. Staff development/training Included
5. The various levels/grades obtain sample materials and review the options. Most textbook adoptions involve the following:
- a. Grade level team reviews the textbooks with the criteria developed above
 - b. Recommendations go to the larger team (made up of department heads and a school leader or two, depending on size)
 - c. Top two to three choices are often put out for parents with short review form (with criteria for comments)
 - d. After comments are received, curriculum committee or school leadership makes final decision
 - e. Decisions are communicated to teachers and parents
 - f. Purchase is made
6. The first year of curriculum implementation begins. Training is scheduled and completed. Course maps are adjusted at the unit level to reflect changes in curriculum and textbooks from the curriculum review. Assessments are adjusted appropriately.

The school's curriculum documents are living documents that should be improved year-by-year so that the instructional program continues to grow in its effectiveness. All teachers should be able to easily access the curriculum documents and should be engaged in improving the curriculum documents and individual lesson plans each year.

We also suggest that you reach out to other ACSI schools to learn how they create, review, and revise curriculum documents. ACSI is a community of Christian schools supporting each other with a common goal for strengthening Christian education.

The following page contains a graphic representation of a version of a curriculum review process to help as a guide as you develop your school's system.

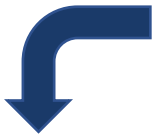
Establish a curriculum review committee:

Include a teacher from each division + administrator + curriculum specialist, etc.



Committee completes a needs assessment:

Consider student outcomes, textbook data, assessments, standards, teaching techniques, biblical integration, etc.

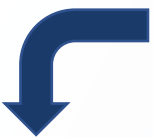


Develop a revised Scope & Sequence:

Adjust curriculum as needed when changes occur in philosophy, goals/objectives for grade levels, content, skills, resources, etc.



Discuss basic parameters for textbook adoption considering such factors as worldview, pedagogy, standards, cost, quality, staff development, etc.



Obtain sample materials to be reviewed by grade level teams, then administrators, and possibly parents and other stakeholders.



Curriculum is implemented, training is provided, assessments are adjusted, and course maps are adjusted at the unit level to reflect any changes made from curriculum review.