Six steps of curriculum design

Designing a curriculum is not easy. It is a complicated process that needs to be carefully thought through and involves much strategic decision making. With over 2000 schools now using the Cornerstones Curriculum, we have identified six crucial steps of effective curriculum design. These steps can be used by any school including those wanting to design their curriculum from scratch and others wishing to review their existing curriculum.

Starting with ‘Principles and purpose’ and adding a bit of your own creative sparkle, follow our six steps to design or to refresh your curriculum.

1. **Principles and purpose**
   - Setting out the intent of your curriculum.
   - Schools should begin the design process by establishing their curriculum principles. The curriculum principles should reflect the school’s values, context, pedagogy and needs. Schools should be able to explain the purpose or intent of their principles.
   - For example
     - ‘We believe in a broad and balanced curriculum where all subjects are valued. A broad and balanced curriculum will equip our children with a breadth of knowledge and skills in all areas of the curriculum.’

2. **Review and evaluate**
   - Deciding what is working well and where there is room for improvement.
   - After clarifying its principles and purpose, a school should set out its pupil offer. The pupil offer should explain how the school intends to enrich its curriculum with educational visits, extra-curricular activities and specific entitlements.
   - For example
     - ‘All children in our school are entitled to two educational visits a year.’

3. **Breadth and balance**
   - Developing the content of your curriculum.
   - Schools will need to arrange their curriculum content into a range of exciting themes and projects. A school will need to make strategic decisions about what it covers, how it covers it and in how much depth to achieve both breadth and balance. These choices and decisions create a school’s curriculum structure or long-term plan.

4. **Teaching narrative**
   - Planning the delivery of your curriculum.
   - After organising their long-term plans, teachers need to plot the narrative of their projects. A teaching narrative should be vibrant and cohesive. It should detail the starting point for each project, and explain how it will develop. This process creates a medium-term plan that can be used as a starting point for short-term plans if these are required.

5. **Resources**
   - The foot soldiers of a high-quality curriculum.
   - Schools need to identify the resources required to bring their curriculum to life and ensure its coherence. A good curriculum needs good quality resources. Resources include human resources, practical equipment, environments and teaching resources.

6. **Curriculum design**
   - After establishing its curriculum, a school will need to regularly review its impact on teaching and learning and make any adaptations or changes. It will help to consider the original curriculum principles and purposes when reviewing, and focus on a particular area for development in school.

   - For example
     - ‘How well is the curriculum helping children to progress in writing?’

   - If you want help designing your curriculum then contact us to book a free online meeting with one of our experienced Curriculum Consultants.
   - 03333 20 8000