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# CURRICULUM MAPPING Evolving

“You need a passport to go from class to class in this building,” moaned Ryan, a grade 7 student. Much time was wasted, he continued, just figuring out what each teacher required, especially in terms of research assignments. Little did Ryan know that his teachers were experiencing their own struggle to understand curriculum and program delivery.

At the time, high stakes testing had added its requirements to an unprecedented flood of curriculum and instructional data. Novice and experienced teachers were struggling to stay barely ahead of this unrelenting avalanche. Sensing that staff would be receptive to any reasonable solution, I proposed we test the planning strategy outlined by Heidi Hayes Jacobs in her book *Mapping the Big Picture*. Use of this tool would allow for extensive collaboration as we shared planning tasks and built a scaffold of related learning experiences over the three senior school years. Might we be better able to train new staff, solve problems, and ultimately deliver a three-year middle school program which required no passport?

With the critically important involvement of the administration, our team established a set of common goals around curriculum mapping. Consensus was needed on a fairly large scale in order to justify this focus in our staff professional development, so we decided we would begin with content, as suggested by Jacobs, because it was the least threatening element. We would ask everyone to come to the planning table with a retrospective overview of the past school year’s teaching content. Mural paper, divided into months of the school year,

snaked across the resource center as teachers from various subject areas consulted curriculum diaries, wrote their content information on cue cards, and placed the cards on the giant chart.

A power surge of discovery filled the room as teachers began to have meaningful dialogue. The visual evidence of redundancies and inconsistencies was immediately apparent. Science and mathematics were huddled over their duplicate data management cards. Music and English were in another corner discussing the timing of a report writing assignment. Music had just realized that by delaying the assignment one month the students would reap the benefits of applying a skill recently taught in another subject area. French immersion and English had a substantial stack of redundant topics. We had found true north on our curriculum compass!

A post meeting survey indicated that we had struck a chord with staff but had generated many more questions. We set targets that were determined collaboratively, focused on measurable results, and were subject to reflective revision. Each grade level would document content over the school year, thus enabling discussion across subject areas. A planning team consisting of an administrator, the teacher-librarian, a resource teacher and a teacher representatives from each grade level would examine vertical planning over the span of three years and would communicate to colleagues about gaps and redundancies on this long range map.

Teachers quickly came to realize that they needed to progress rapidly to the next stage and add skills to their map. As the teacher-librarian, because of the unprecedented attention being placed on both information literacy and technology literacy, I was able to find willing collaborators to develop a three-year plan