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## *Using* **CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS** *to Build Faith in Secondary Students*

BY BARRY HILL

**T**he South Pacific Division recently produced a set of curriculum frameworks that attempt to help teachers think about valuing and faith in a more conscious way.

This is no easy task. Although everyone agrees on the importance of the valuing process in education, and particularly in Christian education, it is difficult to know just how to incorporate it into the curriculum.

Our values shape the way we perceive life and the way we live it. They also form a central component of religious faith. James Fowler<sup>1</sup> says that there are three key components to our faith. These are our centers of value, the images of power we hold and which give us security, and the master story that we tell ourselves. Our spiritual master story is woven from our most important values and from our quest for meaning and security. It helps us interpret our world, find meaning, and cope with life's complexity.

While ever mindful of the importance of values, Christian teachers know that the process of integrating faith and learning is both complex and subtle. If teachers appear to overdo spiritual analogies, or naively inject "too much" perceived spirituality into their relationships with students, they do more harm than good. Trite attempts to integrate faith and learning invite skepticism.

### **A Definition**

After considerable study about curriculum and faith development, I concluded that an

*The author (left) explains the approach to valuing in the English framework to one of the teachers.*

Adventist secondary school subject framework should be a statement of values and principles that guide curriculum development. The values and principles in such a document should be derived from Adventist educational philosophy, which tells us what is real, true, and good. The South Pacific Division frameworks seek to show how Christian values and faith can be integrated with academic learning, and to provide examples of ways this can be done.

The frameworks teach the basic skills, topics, and thematic links outlined in the various state syllabi. They set out some of these skills in checklists and provide practical suggestions for preparing course outlines, programs, units, and lessons. However, they are not a syllabus or teaching program. Instead, they attempt to show how good practice can be placed in a Christian value perspective.

#### **The Writing Process**

Groups of teachers were assigned to write frameworks in specific subjects. A month before each cluster group met, the members received a packet of materials relating to issues in their subject. This procedure added an in-service component to the writing process. Usually, some teachers in each group were initially skeptical about the merit of developing frameworks. But their misgivings evaporated as the groups cooperated in the writing, and as they saw the benefits of the process.

We sought to develop planning and valuing skills and to build a sense of ownership of the frameworks by involving as many teachers as possible in writing the documents. For most cluster meetings, six to eight teachers from across Australia and New Zealand spent three days, including a Sunday, assembling the outline of each framework. Overall, about 120 teachers participated in the project.

We always spent the first morning of our meetings discussing major issues and developing group spirit. Some teachers became frustrated with the theory and apparently circular discussions that occurred at this stage, but they usually settled in as time went on.

Participants invariably found it hard to sit and brainstorm all day. They went away from the three-day workshop exhausted and eager to begin teaching again!

*A South Pacific Division teacher uses the commercial studies framework to plan a unit with an Adventist perspective.*

However, they found the planning process rewarding and challenging. We accomplished a lot at each meeting since we managed to squeeze the writing of 16 documents into a two-year period.

#### **The Integration of Faith and Values in Frameworks**

Fraenkel<sup>2</sup> points out that values do not exist in isolation, but are reflected in the judgments and claims we make. Values are not things, but are standards of conduct, beauty, efficiency, or worth that we try to live up to. They are estimates of worth or merit that we place on various aspects of our experience.

Fowler echoes this definition by explaining that those causes, concerns, and persons that are important to us attract our loyalty and commitment. In order to acquire a set of values, and ultimately faith, we must repeatedly go through the process of valuing—we must identify, judge, and discard or cherish various aspects of experience. These values give our lives meaning and become the basis for our faith.

Because of their importance in thinking, feeling, and learning, values are the focus of our SPD curriculum frameworks. We believe that as we select content and

methods that teach Christian values, we are in fact integrating faith and learning into the curriculum.

#### **What the Frameworks Contain**

The SPD frameworks are usually about 30 pages long. They contain about a dozen elements, among which are the following:

- A philosophy,
- A rationale,
- A set of objectives,
- A list of values,
- Biblical references for some values,
- Suggestions about ways to teach or emphasize values,
- A list of issues,
- Guidelines on assessment, and
- Flowcharts and other summaries to integrate values with topic planning.

#### **Guidelines for Use**

The frameworks have two key uses. Their front section is philosophical. It gives teachers overall directions and can be used or adapted to save work in planning. The back section, with its lists of ideas and resources, provides a kind of shopping list that teachers can leaf through, jotting down values, issues, ideas, and teaching tactics.

## SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION FRAMEWORKS GRADES 7-12

Art	Industrial Technology
Bible	Keyboarding
Commercial Studies	Mathematics
Computer Studies	Music
English	Personal Development
Geography	Physical Education
History	Science
Home Economics	Social Studies

*The South Pacific Division has developed curriculum frameworks for 16 secondary subjects.*

The resulting summary serves to jog the teacher's memory about what can be done either incidentally or purposefully to teach values. Figure 1 shows how this process can work.

The most important framework values are derived from statements of philosophy, which describe both the origins and the elements of subject knowledge that are seen as real, true, and good. From these statements teachers learn which points to emphasize and use for instruction. The rationale, a statement justifying the teaching of the subject, accompanies and extends the statement of values in the philosophy. Some frameworks also contain a list of key concepts developed from Adventist philosophy.

Important values outlined in philosophy statements are fleshed out in the broad objectives. These guide teachers in the valuing process. The objectives relate to values and attitudes, skills and concepts.

Because values of all kinds are basic

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to the valuing process, they are included in frameworks so teachers will know how to begin integrating faith and learning. Teachers can refer to this list and check off values to be used in subject units. For example, one of the 45 key values listed in the commercial studies framework is "Christian stewardship," which is defined as "the responsible management of God's gifts."

A number of teachers who helped us write frameworks wanted to attach scriptural references to value definitions. Some frameworks, such as history, also included Spirit of Prophecy references. While this section of a framework may seem to stretch some values

out of context, it can provide ideas for creative teachers. For example, the commercial studies framework includes Bible texts relating to Christian stewardship. Luke 12:32-34 mentions the provision of treasure in heaven, and Peter reminds us that we should use our gifts to serve others responsibly (1 Peter 4:10).

The process of valuing is informed by discussion and exploration of various issues. Having a list of such issues helps teachers develop the valuing process. In the commercial studies framework, a values-related topic deals with the place of insurance in the Christian life. As students discuss the need for insurance, the appropriate amount to purchase, the rights of the insured, the place of providence, and the meaning of over-insurance, they are led naturally to a range of issues and values that relate to their Christian commitment.

Each framework contains suggestions of ways values can be taught or "caught." In addition to formal teaching strategies, the frameworks encourage a variety of tactics, such as modeling, emphasizing, explaining, making decisions, and so on.

Asking students to make value judgments is one teaching tactic that occurs repeatedly in the frameworks. For example, the teacher can help students to form criteria for judging the ethics of commercial dealings. They are then asked to define the basis for making their judgments and to set out biblical criteria for judging what is morally good.

### Assessment

Assessment of valuing is difficult. In many cases, this area is inadequately developed in the frameworks. The science framework suggests the use of letter grades, marks, profiles, and descriptive statements to evaluate student work. Marks can be given for academic aspects of valuing, such as evaluating. Profiles of student attitudes can be built up over time. Descriptive statements of values and attitudes can be added to reports.

In compiling the framework overview, writers tried to show how to combine the methods and content of integrating faith and learning in a practical way. The one-page unit overviews of topics or subject units in each framework show how to

**FIGURE 1****Summary of a Unit on Work for Commerce****Objectives**

Develop a practical attitude of service to others during employment  
 Develop an attitude of support for those in authority

**Issues**

Discrimination  
 Leisure activities  
 Racism  
 Rights of work force  
 Sex roles

**Values**

Adventist world view  
 Christian stewardship  
 Diligence  
 Honesty and integrity  
 Initiative  
 Planning and foresight

**Suggested Teaching Approaches**

- i) Research the number of different cultures represented in the school and present the data graphically. Note the Adventist perspective on multiculturalism.
- ii) Find current issues or areas of conflict relating to honesty and suggest possible plausible solutions from the employer's and employee's perspective.
- iii) Make a list of responsibilities that could be expected of a new worker in a chosen type of employment. Relate this to initiative and foresight.
- iv) Role model a job interview.
- v) Construct a list of suggested activities and approaches for an unemployed teenager. Emphasize the importance of stewardship.

**Bible References**

- i) Genesis 3:17-19 Why did Adam work?
- ii) Genesis 39:9 Servant/master relationships
- iii) Luke 20:25 Render unto Caesar - responsibility - taxation

combine the various elements of the framework. Figure 1 is a unit overview from the commercial studies framework. It illustrates how objectives, values, issues, valuing tactics and Bible texts set out in the framework can be tied together to give a values-oriented plan for a topic on work.

To create the type of overview in Figure 1 (slightly abbreviated here), pairs of teachers chose a topic, sifted through the parts of the framework the group had created, and refined their ideas to illustrate an approach to planning. The teaching activities were drawn from the teachers' own experience, and show the insights they gained from earlier sessions of work on the framework.

**The Reaction So Far**

Overloaded teachers are wary of anything that creates more work, particularly if it seems too theoretical. Already taxed by the demands of day-to-day teaching, they wonder how useful it will be to read another document, to do even more formal planning. Therefore, frameworks have to be practical. They must be easy to follow and use. We feel that our frameworks fit these guidelines.

In general, teachers are pragmatic. They will adapt parts of the documents that lend themselves to quick and easy application. Many teachers have used or adapted the first part of our frameworks—the philosophy, rationale, and objectives—incorporating them into their work programs as a model that exhibits to church and state visitors and evaluators the spiritual emphasis in their planning.

Other teachers read the documents at the start of each school term to give themselves direction. A smaller percentage have taken a framework and rewritten their teaching program to fit its format. While we think that any use of a framework is helpful, we view the latter group as those who are most serious about the valuing process.

I have visited most of our secondary schools to show the teachers how the frameworks can be used. The responses have been both disappointing and rewarding. We are disappointed to see teacher indifference or superficial use of frameworks. But there are plenty of rewards, too. In some bigger schools, departments have

set aside several hours to meet together and plan a topic based on the framework. This has been an interesting process to watch, particularly when teachers who wrote the framework try to persuade their colleagues of its merits.

One school has developed sample lessons in such subjects as art, English, history, and industrial technology by using the frameworks. At a two-day session, geography teachers from four schools took their framework and used it to develop a 150-page resource kit on the global use and misuse of resources. This kind of curriculum development represents one of the best ways to use a framework.

Because people differ in temperament and teaching styles, not all of them will find all parts of any framework useful or comfortable to use in planning. That is why the documents supply so many different types of ideas. In fact, we recommend that framework designers develop the same ideas and values in numerous ways to suit the different teaching styles of the school staff. In reality, many teachers will probably use some sections and ideas from frameworks, while only a few will adopt their full structure.

**Conclusion**

The South Pacific Education Department has made a serious attempt to integrate faith and learning in a systematic way. Our curriculum appears to be successfully achieving this goal. As we refine the frameworks, they will become more useful and should enjoy a broader acceptance and greater usefulness. ☺

*To obtain a copy of one or more frameworks, write to Dr. Humberto Rasi at the General Conference Department of Education, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904 U.S.A.*

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1. James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).
2. Jack R. Fraenkel, *Helping Students Think and Value* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973).