EVALUATING HIGH SCHOOL CHURCH CURRICULA VIA THE DANIELSON FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING: A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

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APPROVAL SHEET

EVALUATING HIGH SCHOOL CHURCH CURRICULA VIA
THE DANIELSON FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING:
A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

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To Paul: my husband, my best friend, and my thinking partner. I could not have started or completed this work without your support and encouragement.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRA	critical reflection assumptions
ETS	Educational Testing Service
FFT	Danielson Framework for Teaching
HERI	Higher Education Research Institute
IDM	Inquiry Design Model
IDMCE	Inquiry Design Method for Christian Education
QFT	Question Formulation Technique

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PREFACE

This project is not only a reflection of my own work and passion for improving Christian education but also the reflection of countless individuals who have taught me, encouraged me, challenged me, and supported me along the way. First and foremost, my wonderful husband, Paul, sparked my interest in pursuing a PhD in Education. Without his encouragement and belief in my abilities, I would have remained content. He was also my motivator, thinking partner, and constant support when the work was hard and time consuming. He is my favorite teacher, my voice of reason, and my very best friend.

Second, Dr. Anthony Foster, my academic advisor, has not only offered wonderful insight and feedback for this project but also made a lasting impact on my knowledge for teaching, curriculum design, and effective instruction. I have been deeply impacted by his kind and encouraging words and his belief in me as a student and leader. Dr. John David Trentham persisted in answering my many questions, pushed me to persevere when I wasn't sure I could continue, and has always been such a kind encourager. Special thanks also go to Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, who wisely balanced the amount of challenge and productive struggle with the guidance and support that was essential for my learning and growth as a writer.

There are numerous people that have challenged me to become a critical thinker and to grow as a learner, teacher, and leader. Dr. Robert Lyons first inspired my love for learning and leading at Murray State University. Mrs. Pat Gold gave me an opportunity to serve in a challenging role that required much growth and quick learning, yet she always supported and encouraged me. An unexpected friendship was bestowed upon me by my supervisor of instruction, Mrs. Carla Whitis. She challenged me in ways that I didn't always recognize at the time, but that I feel certain she had purposefully

masterminded. She stretched me to think, read, and grow as I slowly shifted from a shy young professional into a more confident and compassionate leader. She was the perfect blend of coach and friend, and without her support, I would not be the learner or leader I am today.

I am so thankful for the love and support of my parents, Jeff and Carolyn Downing. They have provided constant support and encouragement. Jayden, Kanyn, and Kye, my three wonderful boys, have shown me support through their sacrifice, patience, and cheers. They are my happy place. My "Sunday school girls" first ignited my passion for teaching the Bible. They helped me see the overwhelming responsibility and impact of Christian education. I am so proud of the young ladies they have become and for their hearts for Jesus and his kingdom. While they believe I was pushing them to think and make the Bible come alive, they were simultaneously pushing me to see God's greater plans and purposes and a new passion for impacting the world through Christian education. I would not have pursued this path if it weren't for their kind encouragement and thankfulness that motivated me more than they will ever know.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has been so many things in my life: Savior, Lord, Rock, Fortress, Friend, Coach, and much more. God has blessed me more than I deserve, and I pray that my life can glorify him forever.

Lindsey Wilkerson

Mayfield, Kentucky

May 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> How do our young people leave their Sunday School classrooms on Sunday morning? With eyes sparkling with new vision and insight? With serious determination to practice the will of God? With chin up ready to face an unbelieving world in the power of the spirit? With deep questions about God himself? Too often they are glad for the release from a dull, boring session.[1]

While Scripture-based instruction is essential in molding young people into spiritual maturity and moving them toward Christlikeness, there is a significant difference in instruction and effective instruction. The research concern begins at the large-scale level by looking at Christianity in the U.S. and then narrows by examining Christian education and church curriculum specifically.

The Research Problem

Overarching Problem: Christianity in the U.S.

A Pew Research Center survey in 2018 and 2019 concludes that the number of Americans who describe themselves as Christians is now 65 percent, which is down twelve percentage points in the last decade.[2] "The Great Opportunity," produced by the Pinetops Foundation, reports that thirty-five million youth raised in Christian homes will not call themselves Christians by 2050.[3] The church is losing a future source of leaders,

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[1] Lois E. LeBar, *Education That Is Christian* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1995), 21.

[2] Pew Center Research, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," Religion & Public Life Project (blog), October 17, 2019, www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/, 1.

[3] Pinetops Foundation, "The Great Opportunity: The American Church in 2050," 2018, www.greatopportunity.org, 9. This report is a collection of data from many surveys and research studies exploring religion in the U.S., along with fertility, mortality, and immigration, to predict how the U.S. church will look in the next thirty years. The Pinetops Foundation is a private foundation that looks to find

pastors, teachers, and parents, and the potential for a massive decline in the American church is a genuine concern.[4] Research conducted by the Search Institute indicates alarming results.[5] Only 11 percent of teens and 32 percent of professing Christians have a well-developed faith.[6] Furthermore, while the U.S. population has grown by 27 percent, Sunday school attendance has dropped from forty-one million to twenty-six million since 1972, according to the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*.[7]

Narrowing the Problem:
Christian Education

The U.S. is losing professing Christians, Sunday school members, church leaders, and spiritually mature church members. According to "Effective Christian Education," a study conducted by Search Institute, Christian education plays a significant role in this decline. The study summarizes that "effective Christian education is the most powerful single influence congregations have on maturity of faith," yet "many of the factors needed for effectiveness in Christian education are not currently operating in large numbers of congregations."[8] The authors call for a reform in Christian education, adding that "if congregations heed the call for strengthening Christian education, many of the problems now plaguing mainline denominations may be arrested, including the highly-

innovative solutions to long-term structural problems. It is founded and run by entrepreneurs; Pinetops seeks out extraordinary leaders and communities who have the potential to create a major impact. Pinetops approaches philanthropy through the lens of a Christian faith and generally affirms the principles found in the Lausanne Covenant.

[4] Pinetops Foundation, "The Great Opportunity," 9.

[5] Search Institute, "Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations" (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990), 2-5. This three-and-a-half-year project studied six Protestant denominations in the U.S., including 11,122 persons in 561 congregations. The Search Institute states that its mission is to partner with organizations to conduct and apply research that promotes positive youth development and advances equity. They generate knowledge through mixed-methods research, develop and disseminate resources based on research, and partner with others to improve outcomes.

[6] Search Institute, "Effective Christian Education," 25.

[7] *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994) quoted in Tom Schultz and Joani Schultz, *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church and How to Fix It* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2004), 8.

[8] Search Institute, "Effective Christian Education," 3.

publicized loss of members and the equally troubling problem of member inactivity."[9] The "Effective Christian Education" study, along with other reports, indicates that Christian education has not evolved in appropriate ways to meet new challenges.[10] "American Christians are woefully unprepared to be responsible agents of their faith. They know too little of its story, its teaching, and its moral framework to exemplify and testify to their faith in a pluralist society."[11] Gregory C. Carlson similarly argues, "Why is there so little Christlikeness amid so much Christian teaching?"[12]

"The Great Opportunity" calls for the transformation of youth discipleship, arguing that ministry models used for the past fifty years are becoming less effective.[13] It claims that youth need to be equipped to be missionaries to reach their peers and that youth ministry must be revamped in order to be "Gospel advancing and disciple-multiplying."[14] The report adds that youth are leaving the church because they are uninterested in the Christian life instead of due to a crisis of faith or intellectual rejection.[15] Mark Rutter argues that the lives of Christians look very similar to those of non-Christians, pointing to the fact that although "we live in a culture where Christian literature, broadcasts, and churches abound, the lives of Christians are not necessarily being transformed."[16]

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[9] Search Institute, "Effective Christian Education," 3.

[10] David Schuller, *Rethinking Christian Education* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993), 20.

[11] Schuller, *Rethinking Christian Education*, 20.

[12] Gregory C. Carlson, "Transformational Teaching," in *Christian Education: A Guide to the Foundations of Ministry*, ed. Freddy Cardoza (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 132.

[13] Pinetops Foundation, "The Great Opportunity," 10.

[14] Pinetops Foundation, "The Great Opportunity," 10.

[15] Pinetops Foundation, "The Great Opportunity," 10.

[16] Mark V. Rutter, "A Holistic Approach to Learning: The Key to Change," *Christian Education Journal* 10, no. 3 (1990): 63.

Similarly, Dan Lambert claims that based on anecdotal and statistical evidence, we are losing our youth because we have done a poor job of making disciples of the teens in our care.[17] He argues that the church has failed to teach teens effectively, but even more so, it has failed to raise effective teachers.[18] Lambert adds, "But, this doesn't have to be the case. We can teach teenagers not just what the Bible says, but why we trust the Bible and how the Bible should make a difference in our everyday lives. And we can equip almost any willing Christian to be a very good teacher."[19] He suggests that the best way to reach the next generation of Christians is to teach holistically by feeding the soul, challenging the mind, strengthening the emotions, and guiding actions.[20]

Lois LeBar also point to the ineffectiveness of Christian education by stating that there are not enough missionaries or monetary support for those willing to go because we have failed to reach those in our churches effectively.[21] She claims, "Thousands who have been *exposed* to the truth in our Sunday Schools have never been *enlisted* for Christ. They have been part of the crowd that thronged Christ but have never touched the hem of his garment for themselves (Mark 5:24-34)."[22]

Specific Problem: Church Curriculum

Many factors contribute to effective Christian education or a lack thereof, including leadership, programs, teachers, classroom dynamics, relationships, and curriculum. John Hattie recently completed a fifteen-year synthesis of over eight hundred meta-analyses relating to achievement among school-aged students and the influences of

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[17] Dan Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference: How to Teach for Holistic Impact* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 13.

[18] Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference*, 13.

[19] Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference*, 13.

[20] Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference*, 15.

[21] LeBar, *Education That Is Christian*, 24.

[22] LeBar, *Education That Is Christian*, 24 (emphasis original).

such achievement. Hattie concluded with six signposts toward excellence in education. Each signpost reflects the importance of a high-quality teacher, with five out of the six explicitly indicating what effective teachers should do. The first signpost simply states, "Teachers are among the most powerful influences in learning."[23]

Interestingly, however, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain reports that only 34 percent of youth Christian education teachers understand the educational theory and practice of classroom instruction.[24] Church teachers often have little background or experience in effective teaching. In fact, church attendees rate the teaching of the church among the bottom in quality of instruction.[25] In fact, only 39 percent of Christian education teachers reported having a mature, well-developed faith.[26] However, only 57 percent of congregations offer any training for education volunteers.[27] Only 21 percent of church teachers are evaluated annually, which adds to the potential for ineffective instruction.[28]

Ineffective Christian education is highly possible when combining the lack of knowledgeable teachers, quality on-going teacher training, and frequent teacher observations. While the argument for more qualified teachers, more teacher training, and more teacher evaluation would be plausible, it is a daunting task for churches, especially those who struggle to recruit teacher volunteers. Many churches "hand a teacher the curriculum and hope for the best."[29]

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[23] John Hattie, *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement* (London: Routledge, 2009), 238.

[24] Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 102.

[25] Schultz and Schultz, *Why Nobody Learns at Church*, 8.

[26] Schultz and Schultz, *Why Nobody Learns at Church*, 20.

[27] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 102.

[28] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 105.

[29] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 31.

Sunday school authorities claim that curriculum is a critical factor in the success of Sunday school.[30] With Scripture as a central core, a curriculum can have transformational power in a Christian's life as well as throughout a congregation, community, and—ultimately—the world.[31] Curriculum requires teachers to use flexibility in methodology, have a vast amount of biblical knowledge, have a high level of expertise in instructional practices, and have the ability to conduct a classroom technically.[32] Therefore, curriculum should be designed in a way that accounts for, reduces, or eliminates the deficiencies in uneducated, untrained teachers and the lack of teacher observations and coaching for improvement.

Hattie's third signpost states, "Teachers need to be aware of what each and every student is thinking and knowing, to construct meaning and meaningful experiences in light of this knowledge, and have proficient knowledge and understanding of their content to provide meaningful and appropriate feedback."[33] A well-designed curriculum can assist teachers in this endeavor. Hattie also explains that three specific aspects of curriculum have a significant impact on student learning: (1) developing a curriculum with a balance of surface-level knowledge and deep understanding, (2) focusing on learning strategies to construct meaning, and (3) planned, deliberate strategies that explicitly teach specific skills and deeper understanding.[34]

Roehlkepartain reports that over 70 percent of Christian educators are satisfied with their curriculum, yet he argues that the curriculum's effectiveness should be

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[30] Winona Walworth, "Educational Curriculum," in *Introduction to Biblical Christian Education*, ed. Werner C. Graendorf (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 283.

[31] James Estep Jr, "Supervising Tour Group Itineraries: Administering Curriculum," in *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims*, ed. James Estep Jr., Roger White, and Karen Estep (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 222.

[32] Estep, "Supervising Tour Group Itineraries," 233.

[33] Hattie, *Visible Learning*, 238.

[34] Hattie, *Visible Learning*, 35.

questioned.[35] He adds that "satisfaction does not necessarily indicate effectiveness. For example, does the curriculum emphasize the elements of content and process that are vital to helping people grow in faith? Do they provide adequate guidance for teachers, who often are not familiar with educational theory and practice?"[36] Educating students for lasting, transferrable learning that promotes Christlikeness is difficult, and satisfaction cannot be the measurement of a curriculum's effectiveness.

According to Robert Pazmiño, a packaged curriculum does not currently provide the extent of guidance necessary for teachers unfamiliar with instructional theory. He suggests that published curriculum often focuses on behavioral objectives, neglecting a holistic approach that teachers must adopt in planning for problem-solving and activities for students.[37] He adds that there should be a space in the explicit curriculum for students to create, express, and explore new ways to apply the content learned and transfer insights learned, creating meaningful integration.[38] Pazmiño states, "The most common experience in teaching is that so much content is shared at the metaphoric table that students have little or no time to chew and digest the food – that is, to discuss and connect the content."[39]

Similarly, Robert Zais concludes that depth of learning is necessary, but due to the chronological framework of curriculum, it is often void of essential deep learning.[40] He argues for a balance of content-centered and student-centered education, with a focus on student understanding and not merely content coverage. Zais adds, "A great deal of

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[35] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 82.

[36] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 82.

[37] Robert W. Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education: An Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 101.

[38] Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education*, 111.

[39] Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education*, 111.

[40] Robert S. Zais, *Curriculum: Principles and Foundations* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 440.

work still remains to be done in the development of [curriculum] designs that respects the logic and authority of knowledge and at the same time provide for the humane development of learners."[41] Lambert also speaks on the need for depth of learning, stating, "We can't assume that real learning has happened just because a student can accurately restate what was taught. Learning results in changed lives, not just knowing more info."[42]

According to Roehlkepartain, youth programs often fall into one of two categories. Some programs are designed to promote having fun, making friends, and—only somewhat—growing in one's faith, while others tend to be passive lecture-style programs reliant on telling students what to believe so they will not have to think. Roehlkepartain argues that "neither option is good if our goal is to nurture a vibrant, life-changing, life-shaping faith in young people. Youth whose intellectual capacities are growing exponentially, need a setting where they are challenged to think and ask the tough questions about their faith."[43]

Zais states that "problems of curriculum development in particular, are mainly the result of decisions based on unexamined assumptions, encapsulated perceptions, and cursory and superficial thinking and planning."[44] While this statement was written several years ago, there is no current research insinuating that the dilemma has been resolved. Lambert claims that while commercial curricula have benefits for Christian education, there are many issues involved, and therefore one should evaluate the purpose of the curriculum, know how to decide if it is good or not, and know how to implement it.[45]

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[41] Zais, *Curriculum*, 442.

[42] Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference*, 79.

[43] Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, "The Thinking Climate: A Missing Ingredient in Youth Ministry," *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 1 (1994): 53.

[44] Zais, *Curriculum*, 500.

[45] Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference*, 107.

According to Lambert, while curricula in the 1980s appeared to be "dumbed-down," in the 1990s, publishers began producing curricula that helped teachers understand the learning process, the content, and how to best apply the curriculum to students. However, this information is mostly found in the curriculum's introduction, which teachers often skip in order to quickly look over the lesson to be taught.[46] Lambert adds, "Publishers intend for teachers to adapt the materials for their own classes, not to teach it word-for-word as printed."[47]

What if it were no longer the untrained teacher's responsibility to adapt the curriculum and design his or her own instruction? What if designers wrote the curriculum as a guide to effective instruction based on student exploration, deep thinking, and understanding about Scripture instead of a passive lecture-style "information dump"? Would this account for uneducated, minimally trained volunteer teachers and positively impact curriculum, Christian education, spiritual maturity among Christians, and the spread of the gospel among all nations?

Significance of the Study

As evident in the research problem, there are many recent studies on the condition of Christianity in the U.S. Several books have been written as a response to these studies offering suggestions for improving the state of Christianity, improving spiritual maturity among church members, and increasing the effectiveness of Christian education. There are claims that youth programs have swayed too much toward content and lecture or too far toward student-centered fun and games. However, there is a void in the research evaluating packaged curricula purchased and used in churches. Karen Estep and James Estep claim, "Evaluative assessment becomes the catalyst for change or

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[46] Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference*, 107.

[47] Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference*, 108.

improvement, the means for discovering strengths and areas that need strengthening."[48] While there are guides for churches on evaluating curriculum for purchasing purposes, none specifically addresses the instructional quality of the curriculum. In fact, there is not currently a measurement tool, nor is there existing research on the evaluation of the instructional quality of curriculum available for purchase. Therefore, how do we know the curriculum we are handing teachers, often untrained and spiritually immature themselves, includes sufficient instructional practices and strategies for effectively educating our young people and growing them into Christlikeness?

I propose the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT) as an evaluation tool for assessing effectiveness of curriculum. The FFT was developed by Charlotte Danielson in 1996 based on her research of effective teaching and learning reflective of scientific, theoretical, and experiential findings.[49]

Research Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative study was to evaluate select church curricula for effective instructional practices and the potential for student learning. Domains 1 and 3 of the Danielson Framework for Teaching provided evaluation criteria characteristics, and examples for assessing each curriculum, specifically in the areas of planning, preparation, and instruction.

The FFT was utilized to analyze, critique, and suggest improvement in the selected church curricula. This information was then generalized to all Sunday school or small group curricula for high school students. Findings included strengths of the selected curricula as well as implications and suggestions for improvement, which also serve as

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[48] Karen Lynn Estep and James Riley Estep Jr, "Checking the Legend and Assessing the Journey: Curriculum Evaluation," in Estep, White, and Estep, *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church*, 203.

[49] Charlotte Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2007), 6-7.

guidelines for other high school small group materials. Next, modifications to curriculum design and recommendations for teacher evaluations were offered in order to increase student learning, spiritual maturity, and Christlike transformation.

Delimitations of the Proposed Research

Due to a large number of high school curricula in circulation, the quantitative study focused on evaluating high school discipleship and small group curricula from five of the best-selling published curricula among evangelical churches. This initial delimitation assisted in narrowing the curricula from the many publishing companies used among evangelical churches to five of the best-selling high school curricula. Although delimiting the evaluation process to only five curricula, the best-selling curricula delimitation purposively offered the largest representation of student learning experiences.

The Danielson Framework for Teaching was designed for use in classroom observations; however, since this study focused narrowly on the effectiveness of the curricula, the FFT was used to review and evaluate curricula as opposed to classroom observation. This eliminates the effects of diverse levels of skill and ability among teachers. The FFT consists of four domains: (1) Planning and Preparation, (2) Classroom Environment, (3) Instruction, and (4) Professional Responsibilities. This study focused on Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation) and Domain 3 (Instruction) in order to evaluate curricula in a standalone fashion. The FFT is not intended to evaluate theological views; however, Domain 3A could be used in this manner. For this study, the FFT was only used to evaluate instructional effectiveness. Although appropriate theological teaching is essential, it was not the sole purpose of this particular study.

By evaluating the curricula as opposed to classroom observations, this study ruled out the effects of teacher training and influence, classroom dynamics, positive or negative relationships, and any factor outside of the curriculum contributing to

instructional effectiveness. This study evaluated the potential for student learning based solely on the curricula and the characteristics applicable from the FFT.

Research Questions

The overarching question for this study was "According to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, what are common strengths and weaknesses among high school small group curricula, and what could increase their effectiveness in promoting transferrable learning and spiritual growth?" The following qualitative research questions assisted in answering the overarching question of this study:

1. What are five of the best-selling curricula among evangelical churches for high school Sunday school classes or small groups?
2. How does each curriculum score according to Domains 1 and 3 on the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT)?
3. Is church curriculum presently written in a way that trained or untrained teachers can effectively follow to promote student thinking, application, and transfer of biblical knowledge and understanding into Christlike living?
4. Based on strengths and weaknesses of curricula according to Domains 1 and 3 on the FFT, what are suggestions and further implications for improving church curricula designed for high school students?
5. What are suggested practices in church contexts using the FFT for evaluation?

Proposed Instrumentation

This study utilized the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which was initially developed over two decades ago by Charlotte Danielson. It has been revised several times, most recently in 2013. The FFT is a research-based tool that describes components of effective instruction. The FFT is the most widely used tool for the evaluation of teaching practice in the U.S. It has influenced many other frameworks, evaluation rubrics, and policies. "The FFT has been applied to a variety of contexts and has evolved to align to the new standards, been updated to include content-specific applications, and has the

potential to be applied to countless strategic priorities, instructional approaches, and innovations."[50]

Procedural Overview

In order to execute this study, five of the best-selling evangelical curricula were selected, as these represent the largest population of student experiences. Based on the literature reviewed and internet searches, this information was not readily available, so further investigation was required. While there is not a list of the most popular or best-selling curricula, Christian Book Distributors (Christianbook.com) is a distributor of many published curricula for evangelical churches. I contacted them to obtain the five most popular publishing companies of teen small group curricula. From their list of five publishing companies with the most sales on their site, I contacted each company to find their best-selling curricula for teens. Then, I evaluated these five curricula.

Ten lessons from each curriculum were evaluated based on criteria from Domains 1 and 3 of the latest version (2013) of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.[51] Each of the five sections under Domains 1 and 3 of the FFT received a score ranging from 1 to 4 (1 = Ineffective; 2 = Developing; 3 = Accomplished; 4 = Exemplary). Each level of scoring has critical attributes to look for as well as possible examples.

Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation) consists of five areas that are all applicable to this study:

Domain 1A: Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy

Domain 1B: Demonstrating knowledge of students

Domain 1C: Setting instructional outcomes

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[50] The Danielson Group, "Our Story," accessed February 17, 2020, www.danielsongroup.org/our-story.

[51] The Danielson Group, "The Framework for Teaching," accessed February 17, 2020, www.http://2013_FfTEvalInstrument_Web_v1.2_20140825.pdf.

Domain 1D: Demonstrating knowledge of resources

Domain 1E: Designing coherent instruction

Domain 1F: Designing student assessments

Domain 2 (Classroom Environment) involves creating an atmosphere of respect and rapport, establishing a culture for learning, managing classroom procedures, managing student behavior, and organizing physical space. Evaluating curriculum alone using this domain is impossible due to the importance of student and teacher observation to score each criterion.

Domain 3 (Instruction) consists of five different areas that were applicable to this study:

Domain 3A: Communicating with students

Domain 3B: Using questioning and discussion techniques

Domain 3C: Engaging students in learning

Domain 3D: Using assessment in instruction

Domain 3E: Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness

Domain 4 (Professional Responsibilities) focuses solely on the teacher's professional responsibilities. This study did not include Domain 4 because it does not relate to curriculum evaluation. Domain 1 and Domain 3, including all components within each domain, were utilized to evaluate each of the five curricula selected.

All five curricula were rated from 1 to 4 for each component under each evaluated domain for each of the ten sample lessons. The ten sample lessons were averaged for one overall score for each domain per curricula. This rating system provided a potential for twenty points for each domain, a total of forty points overall. Each curriculum received an overall score, a score for each domain, a score for each component within each domain, and overall strengths and weaknesses according to results within each domain.

All five curricula evaluated were combined to find overall strengths and weaknesses per domain component. These results were then generalized to all high school Sunday school or small group curricula among evangelical churches. Based on the results for all five curricula, suggestions for improvement were made for each curriculum individually and for a generalization of all church curricula for high school students. Standard practices for teacher evaluation within churches were also discussed.

Conclusion

Many factors have prompted this study, including the research-based prediction that the number of U.S. teens claiming to be Christians will drop significantly by 2050. Likely contributing to this decline, Christian education has not proven itself effective, and evangelical churches are reliant upon curriculum to make up for the fact that many teachers are untrained, not observed or coached regularly, and often spiritually immature themselves. Can small group curriculum for teens effectively carry this burden? If curriculum bears this weight, can designers strengthen curriculum enough to bear the load effectively? These explorable questions rely on the utilization of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to reveal common strengths and weaknesses among high school Sunday school or small group curricula as well as factors that may increase their effectiveness in promoting transferrable learning and spiritual growth. Chapter 2 further explores the current literature on church curriculum, evaluation, and effective instruction.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To further explore the literature supporting the concepts found in the research question ("According to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, what are common strengths and weaknesses among high school small group curricula and what could increase their effectiveness in promoting transferrable learning and spiritual growth"), I begin with the theological foundation and vision for Christian education, a literature review of the current status of Christian education, and the role of curriculum in Christian education. Next, I present the main components of constructivism, including biblically flawed and biblically cohesive constructivist principles, and formulate a constructivist educational approach from a biblical worldview. I then discuss a faith-based constructivist model for transformational teaching, a culture of thinking and discussion, and curriculum design. Next, I explore the evaluation of church curriculum and the specific components involved. Lastly, I present the Danielson Framework for Teaching, specifically Domains 1 and 3, in order to effectively evaluate church curriculum for the purposes established in the vision for Christian education. It should be noted that many of the resources, especially those related specifically to curriculum and evaluation, are dated. This is not a reflection of a lack of research but an indication of the existing gap in literature and, therefore, the necessary work that must be done to evaluate and improve Christian education, specifically the evaluation, implementation, and design of curricula for churches.

Theological Foundation for Christian Education

First and foremost, Christian education must be grounded theologically in biblical truth. Christian educators, as all Christians, are charged with the chief purpose of bringing glory to God and fulfilling the Great Commission. According to Michael Anthony, "Theology and education become the means to accomplishing the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20."[1] He adds, "At its core, its innermost component, education is based primarily on a worldview, a philosophical or theological system of understanding reality, truth, and values. As such, education is ultimately a practical expression of one's philosophical convictions."[2] Therefore, the belief in absolute truth and the reliance upon its premises must be placed at the center of curriculum.

How shall we know and teach absolute truth? According to George Knight, "Epistemology is a primary determinant of educational beliefs and practices."[3] Furthermore, Christian education, founded upon the belief in "revelation as a source of knowledge, will undoubtedly have a curriculum and role for the Bible in that curriculum that differ in substantial ways from an institution based upon naturalistic premises."[4] Christian educators are dependent upon the epistemological view that knowledge is revealed from God. This revelation comes through general and specific means.[5]

General revelation comes to all people continuously through creation, God's care, conscience belief in right and wrong, and a sense that there is a God.[6] Special revelation, on the other hand, comes to specific people at specific times through

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[1] Michael J. Anthony, "The Nature of Theology and Education," in *A Theology for Christian Education*, ed. James R. Estep Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 16.

[2] Anthony, "The Nature of Theology and Education," 18.

[3] George R. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 26.

[4] Knight, *Philosophy and Education*, 26-27.

[5] Gregg R. Allison and Michael J. Anthony, "Revelation, Scripture, and Christian Education," in Estep, Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 73.

[6] Allison and Anthony, "Revelation, Scripture, and Christian Education," 73.

Scripture, God's acts, and the work of Jesus.[7] Gregg Allison and Michael Anthony summarize that Scripture continues to make God's revelation available because "Scripture—which is itself special revelation—is the inspired, truthful, authoritative, clear, sufficient, necessary, and powerful Word of God."[8] Therefore, Christian educators must ground their beliefs and work in the emphasis on, reliance upon, study of, and meditation of Scripture because as we believe and interact with Scripture, we are interacting with God himself.[9]

It is also paramount that Christian educators understand the creation and redemptive plan of God as a basis from which they work. Although humankind was created in the image of God, this image was deeply marred as a result of sin and the fall. Therefore, the need for restoration to God through justification and sanctification has set the precedent and vision for Christian education. Christian education must rely on this foundational purpose.

Vision for Christian Education

In Christian education, there must be a biblical philosophy of education centered on a vision to reach and disciple students to create Christlike transformation. Jim Wilhoit argues that "the question of how to teach can be adequately answered only after settling the question of the goal of teaching."[10] According to Anthony, "Christian education is distinct from other kinds of education in that its goal is the transformation of the whole person into the likeness of Christ (Col. 1:28)."[11]

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[7] Allison and Anthony, "Revelation, Scripture, and Christian Education," 73-74.

[8] Allison and Anthony, "Revelation, Scripture, and Christian Education," 79.

[9] Allison and Anthony, "Revelation, Scripture, and Christian Education," 79-80.

[10] Jim Wilhoit, *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 10.

[11] Anthony, "The Nature of Theology and Education," 21.

Therefore, the goal of Christian education is the promotion of faith development and spiritual formation. Timothy Paul Jones and Michael Wilder suggest that faith development should be "centered in content that is both particular and personal," "inseparable from the theological construct of sanctification," and "should reflect the crucial role of the faith community."[12] Robert Pazmiño explains the challenge educators face when assessing their efforts related to this goal; he suggests that educators hold a vision of Christian education that encompasses a thorough understanding of conversion and teaches how to walk in the new way.[13]

The ultimate goal of development is that God is glorified as we become more like Christ in all facets of life.[14] Julie A. Gorman describes this process as "growing up in Christ," which is reflected in "knowing the meaning of increasing surrender to His lordship, discovering widening dimensions of His guidance, becoming aware of the broadening subtleties of sin."[15] John M. Dettoni similarly states, "Thinking, feeling, and doing, however, are not the ends of knowledge. The end of knowledge is to BE someone transformed by the written Word, to become more like the living Word."[16] He concludes, "Teaching is not for transmission of information alone, but for transformation of the person. We teach for growth, maturity, and development of learners, not so they can merely pass a test nor to satisfy some administrative body. . . . We teach that people will

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[12] Timothy Paul Jones and Michael Wilder, "Faith Development and Christian Formation," in *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development*, ed. James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 191.

[13] Robert W. Pazmiño, "A Comprehensive Vision for Conversion in Christian Education," *Religious Education* 87, no. 1 (1992): 92.

[14] James E. Plueddemann, "The Power of Piaget," in *Nurture That Is Christian: Developmental Perspectives on Christian Education*, ed. James C. Wilhoit and John M. Dettoni (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 59.

[15] Julie A. Gorman, "Children and Developmentalism," in Wilhoit and Dettoni, *Nurture That Is Christian*, 143.

[16] John M. Dettoni, "On Being a Developmental Teacher," in Wilhoit and Dettoni, *Nurture That Is Christian*, 250.

become mature and complete, being transformed more and more into Christ's likeness."[17] Similarly, Ken Coley states, "Where no change has occurred, no effective teaching and no learning have taken place."[18] As educators strive to design and deliver effective instruction, the overarching goal and the following details should continually reflect this vision for education.

Therefore, it is paramount that Christian educators are mindful of this vision and the evident results of an educational model indicative of the pursuit of Christlike transformation among students. High student attendance, compliant listening, and the occasional student response to a question posed by the teacher are not indicators of successful teaching and learning, nor are they appropriate goals for a Christian educator. Yet, these characteristics often represent the unconscious or unarticulated goals of teachers and churches. Spiritual maturation involves far more than listening, reading, and cognitive acquisition.[19] Howard Hendricks plainly states, "The name of the game in Christian education is not knowledge—it's active obedience."[20]

The goal of all Christian educators should be to facilitate spiritual development by influencing students' mental and spiritual growth into the likeness of Christ. To promote this type of learning, teachers must use a combination of proper biblical exegesis and effective instructional practices to increase students' knowledge in a way that transforms their lives. Curriculum must be designed with the understanding that in order for students to learn, information cannot be handed to them. Students cannot be fed

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[17] Dettoni, "On Being a Developmental Teacher," 262.

[18] Ken Coley, "Educational Methodology," in *Christian Education: A Guide to the Foundations of Ministry*, ed. Freddy Cardoza (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 120.

[19] Ted Ward, foreword to Wilhoit and Dettoni, *Nurture That Is Christian*, 12.

[20] Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives: Seven Proven Ways to Make Your Teaching Come Alive* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 1987), 60.

information; they must instead be equipped to feed themselves.[21] Scriptural knowledge must be understood and transferred to students' lives as they make connections and applications.[22] The question then becomes "How do we best accomplish this task, and how will we know if it is effective?"

Current Status of Christian Education

The "Effective Christian Education" study identified six factors essential in nurturing faith, with an effective Christian education program being the most influential by far and a thinking climate that challenges thinking being the second most impactful.[23] A climate that encourages thinking and questioning actually stimulates a deeper, more personal faith.[24] Youth who experience this type of thinking climate are "twice as likely as youth who do not to say that faith is the 'most' or 'very important' influence on their lives."[25] Yet, the same study also found that only 42 percent of youth said church challenges their thinking, and many indicated that their church is boring.[26] Interestingly, youth who reported that their congregation has a thinking climate also saw their church as doing a better job of facilitating spiritual growth; teaching about God, the Bible, and prayer; and knowing and loving Jesus.[27]

While many students indicated that their church is boring, many churches seem to find success with charismatic leaders, entertaining music, fun activities, and messages

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[21] Frances Anderson, "Adolescent Development," in Wilhoit and Dettoni, *Nurture That Is Christian*, 167.

[22] Karen Lynn Estep, "Following Topographical Details: Learning Theory and Curriculum," in *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims*, ed. James Estep Jr., Roger White, and Karen Estep (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 107.

[23] Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, "The Thinking Climate: A Missing Ingredient in Youth Ministry," *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 1 (1994), 54.

[24] Roehlkepartain, "The Thinking Climate," 53.

[25] Roehlkepartain, "The Thinking Climate," 53.

[26] David Schuller, *Rethinking Christian Education* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993), 14.

[27] Schuller, *Rethinking Christian Education*, 58-60.

that require minimal thought or challenge on behalf of listeners, which ensures student attendance and attention. However, these students often have no ownership over their learning or their faith. When they graduate from high school, they are left without true faith or spiritual maturity.[28]

Eugene Roehlkepartain claims that many churches have an overdependence on passive learning styles, such as lectures and one-way communication, which has become "customary" and "overwhelming" in Sunday school classes and training.[29] He adds that one person is the "expert" in a typical church setting while others passively listen. Roehlkepartain suggests that in order "for Christian education to be effective, it must not only transmit insight and knowledge but also must allow insight to emerge through students' self-discovery and experience."[30] Most often, teachers rely heavily on attractively packaged curriculum or readily available resources. Often, these sources rely on poor theology, inferior teaching methods, and insufficient discussion methods.[31]

Roehlkepartain adds that churches often focus exclusively on *what* is taught, with very little emphasis on *how* content is being taught or how people learn best, which results in a reliance on one-way lecture-style communication.[32] According to research, churches often do better with content than with process. Only 41 percent of churches "exhibit the qualities of an effective-education process for youth, and 38 percent for

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[28] Schuller, *Rethinking Christian Education*, 94-95.

[29] Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 31.

[30] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 31.

[31] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 32.

[32] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 137.

adults."[33] In fact, only 34 percent of youth education teachers claim to know educational theory and practice.[34] Is Christian education currently effective, and how do we know?

The Role of Curriculum in Christian Education

Curriculum is a primary vehicle by which Christian educators attempt to reach their goal, and the effectiveness of curriculum is an essential component of students' transformational success.[35] Growing intimacy with God and maturing faith transforms through internalization. Pazmiño suggests that Christian curriculum should merge biblical content and student experience in an impactful way that transforms students.[36] He adds that "Christians must translate their values into the purposes and goals of the curriculum."[37] According to Cynthia Jones Neal, this internalization is achievable when teachers assist students in obtaining and expressing "meaning in ways that would enable them to make this knowledge and meaning their own."[38] Therefore, she suggests that "curriculum should be carefully scrutinized" for students to build conceptual understanding, learn and experience Christlike concepts, discuss and interact with each other, and answer thought-provoking questions.[39]

Gorman adds that since the Scriptures are the main modes of shaping our reasoning, the goal of Christian education is to teach the Word in such a way that it

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[33] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 137.

[34] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 137.

[35] Winona Walworth, "Educational Curriculum," in *Introduction to Biblical Christian Education*, ed. Werner C. Graendorf (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 283.

[36] Robert W. Pazmiño, "Curriculum Foundations," *Christian Education Journal* 8, no. 1 (1987): 31.

[37] Pazmiño, "Curriculum Foundations," 38.

[38] Cynthia Jones Neal, "The Power of Vygotsky," in Wilhoit and Dettoni, *Nurture That Is Christian*, 130.

[39] Jones Neal, "The Power of Vygotsky," 130.

becomes the "personal inner reality out of which the learner operates."[40] Essentially, students must construct a Christian worldview and perspective from which they operate. Therefore, "we must translate the great Truths of faith into thought units that can be experienced by boys and girls."[41]

Constructivism Overview

To meet the established goals of Christian education and curriculum for Christian education, a faith-based constructivism model provides students an opportunity to understand and apply Scripture in a transformative way. Constructivism is a combination of the concepts of many developmental theorists, including the cognitive work of Jean Piaget, the social constructivism of Lev Vygotsky, and the transactional constructivism of John Dewey.[42] Within constructivist perspectives, the prevailing views are divided among cognitive constructivism and social constructivism.[43] "Cognitive constructivists view learning as a cognitive effort to construct understanding while social constructivists focus on the social effort to construct understanding from the culture or group setting."[44] Both forms of constructivism support active learning wherein students use environmental factors to construct knowledge or understanding.[45] A blend of cognitive and social constructivism reflects an image of constructing understanding in a communal setting where students struggle together to understand rich, transformational concepts.

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[40] Gorman, "Children and Developmentalism," 152.

[41] Gorman, "Children and Developmentalism," 152.

[42] Gert Biesta, "Receiving the Gift of Teaching: From 'Learning from' to 'Being Taught By,'" *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32, no. 5 (2012): 450.

[43] Estep, "Following Topographical Details," 107.

[44] Estep, "Following Topographical Details," 107.

[45] Debra Espinor, "Overview of Learning Theories," in *Faith-Based Education That Constructs: A Creative Dialogue between Constructivism and Faith-Based Education,* ed. HeeKap Lee (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 15.

Constructivism focuses on constructed knowledge and application of principles instead of memorizing facts, internal as opposed to external student motivation, and content integrated with students' experiences and real-world situations as opposed to delivered in a content-driven manner.[46] Osmo Kivinen and Pekka Ristela state, "Reacting to the naïve view of learning as remembering and learners as empty vessels that shall be filled with knowledge, or to the behaviourist view of education that is said to treat the learner merely as a recipient of external stimulation, constructivists stress the active nature of learning."[47] Constructivism asks students to create big questions and learn through reflection on experiences and exploration.[48] According to Charlotte Danielson, "constructivism is now acknowledged by cognitive psychologists as providing the most powerful framework for understanding how children [and adults] learn."[49] Scripture supports many aspects of constructivist methodology yet rejects much of constructivist philosophy and theology.[50]

Biblically Flawed Components of Constructivism

Constructivism cannot be wholly adopted as an approach acceptable for Christian education without being sifted through a biblical foundation supported by the beliefs that Scripture is the true authoritative Word of God, the effects of sin are potent in the realm of development, God is the source of all wisdom and knowledge, and sanctification is the ultimate purpose for understanding and growth. Philosophically and

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[46] Dave S. Knowlton, "Shifting Towards a Constructivist Philosophy for Teaching Biblical Principles in K-12 Christian School," *Christian Education Journal* 1, no. 3 (2004): 120.

[47] Osmo Kivinen and Pekka Ristela, "From Constructivism to a Pragmatist Conception of Learning," *Oxford Review of Education* 29, no. 3 (2003): 365.

[48] HeeKap Lee, ed., introduction to *Faith-Based Education That Constructs*, 3.

[49] Charlotte Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2007), 15.

[50] Calvin G. Roso, "Constructivism in the Classroom: Is It Biblical?," in Lee, *Faith-Based Education That Constructs*, 43.

theologically, constructivism, especially radical constructivism based on a postmodern worldview, is mostly at odds with a biblical worldview.

Constructivism, especially in its radical form, is founded on the idea that knowledge and truth are not pre-existing or in need of being discovered but created. According to Jack Fennema, in constructivism, "truth is viewed as being subjective and relative—found 'in the eye of the beholder.'"[51] True constructivism would go beyond the hermeneutical faux pas of accepting multiple interpretations of Scripture to even suggesting that the biblical text does not possess its own inherent (or intended) meaning but means whatever a reader interprets and intends it to mean.[52] Clearly, from a biblical stance, this aspect of constructivism must be rejected. As opposed to constructing *truth*, a Christian educator would strive to lead students in constructing understanding *about* truth found in general and specific revelation.

While secular scientists often accurately summarize an individual's development, they also often neglect the impact of sin's effect on humans and their development. Therefore, any secular theory is incomplete without a biblical-theological understanding of the effects of sin as applied to development.[53] While truth leads us to knowledge, because of the fall and the effects of sin, we now see "through a glass," with a distorted and inadequate picture of reality and understanding.[54]

Scripture and constructivism have differing views on the source of knowledge. Whereas the Bible states that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord and that the source of all knowledge and wisdom is God (Prov 9:10; Isa 28:26-29), constructivists

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[51] Jack Fennema, "Constructivism: A Critique from a Biblical Worldview," in Lee, *Faith-Based Education That Constructs*, 27.

[52] Estep, "Following Topographical Details," 110.

[53] John M. Dettoni and James C. Wilhoit, eds., introduction to *Nurture That Is Christian*, 38.

[54] HeeKap Lee, preface to *Faith-Based Education That Constructs*, xii.

believe that knowledge is constructed internally.[55] Philosophically, constructivism is founded on the belief that "knowledge and truth do not exist beyond a student's perception of that knowledge and truth," and some constructivists reject the idea of absolute truth.[56] In a constructivist definition of internally constructed knowledge, Fennema suggests that by replacing the term "knowledge" with "understanding," this semantic adjustment may bridge the divide.[57] Therefore, a Christian views constructivist education not as construction *of* truth but as construction of understanding *about* the truth.

The Bible states that God reveals knowledge and wisdom; however, the postmodern or radical constructivist would state that knowledge is constructed.[58] Whereas a radical constructivist may believe that truth does not exist beyond what a student perceives as truth, Jesus declared to his disciples, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).[59] In fact, Jesus said that he *is* the truth (John 14:6). Therefore, according to Scripture, individuals know truth if they know Jesus, and knowledge and truth are connected to belief.[60] According to James A. Thorne, cognitive-focused constructivism would allow "for an objective reality where knowledge of truth is possible, allowing reality can only be partially and subjectively understood."[61]

Based on John David Trentham's "principle of inverse consistency," Christians may approach social science research and theory analysis through a proper perspective

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[55] Fennema, "Constructivism: A Critique," 32.

[56] Dave S. Knowlton, James A. Thorne, and C. Harry Harriss, "A Selective Defense of 'Introduction to Christian Doctrine' Online: Disputatious Perspectives and Propitiating Pedagogy," *Christian Education Journal* 6, no. 1 (2002): 113-17.

[57] Fennema, "Constructivism: A Critique," 32.

[58] Fennema, "Constructivism: A Critique," 27.

[59] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the *English Standard Version*.

[60] James A. Thorne, "Biblical Education: Contributions from Constructivism," *Christian Education Journal* 10, no. 1 (2013): 105.

[61] Thorne, "Biblical Education," 104.

based on the divine image and common grace. He articulates that humankind was created in the image of God and therefore equipped with the capacity of observational insight and reflective judgment.[62] Due to the effects of the fall, secular science research and theory interprets meaning through a "teleological and soteriological orientation that is inverted from the inherent purpose and redemptive hope prescribed by the gospel and biblical worldview."[63] However, human observations and insights as seen in social science research and theory may be legitimate observations of human reality and may bear consistencies with "redemptive patterns of human development."[64] Trentham also asserts that due to common grace, or God's favor extended to all people, nonbelievers are "capable of legitimate insights, and that those insights may have qualities that are God-honoring and profitable."[65] Therefore, believers can find meaningful interaction with and qualified affirmation of secularly generated research and insight, though such insight may me limited due to the distorted image of God.[66] Although constructivist theory does not completely align with biblical theology and philosophy, its methodology through research observation and insight may be qualified on the grounds of God's general revelation, the *imago Dei*, and common grace.

Biblically Cohesive Benefits of Constructivism

Whereas constructivist philosophy and theology can find minimal commonalities with Scripture, learning theory finds not only commonalties with but also

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[62] John David Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 1): Approaching and Qualifying Models of Human Development," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (2019): 468.

[63] Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 1)," 470.

[64] Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 1)," 470.

[65] Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 1)," 470.

[66] Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 1)," 471.

scriptural support of constructivist methodology.[67] Constructivist theories have strengthened Christian education by "emphasizing self-directed students, the teacher as facilitator, and well-organized learning experiences."[68] As modeled in his life and teachings, Jesus believed in the learner's active engagement, deep thinking, and application of understanding as opposed to memorization of facts or laws.[69]

Coley argues, "In the Christian view, learners discover truth rather than construct it."[70] He adds, "Teaching is not merely giving out information; it involves guiding others into finding truth for themselves."[71] Curriculum and instruction should guide learners in constructing understanding about discovered truth, not in constructing their own truth. Ted Ward supports a constructivist view of Christian education based on recent studies of human perception and the brain. He states, "The learner is now seen in terms of discovering, building, and reorganizing. The learning process is not just a matter of input and filing or mechanical connections; it is better described as a matter of construction and discovery."[72] Additionally, Ward argues that "the perceptual grasp of anything new is always constructed of bits and pieces of previous experience and understandings."[73] Thus, the teacher's or curriculum designer's role is to create a learning experience for students that facilitates their construction of scriptural understanding.

In creating a learning experience as mentioned, a constructivist classroom should be student-centered and focus on the following teaching practices:

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[67] Fennema, "Constructivism: A Critique," 31.

[68] Lee, preface to *Faith-Based Education That Constructs*, xi.

[69] Lee, preface to *Faith-Based Education That Constructs*, xi.

[70] Coley, "Educational Methodology," 120.

[71] Coley, "Educational Methodology," 134.

[72] Ward, foreword to *Nurture That Is Christian*, 9.

[73] Ward, foreword to *Nurture That Is Christian*, 9.

> Improving student thinking, using questions to allow students to identify their own theories, promoting classroom dialogue between and among students and teachers, encouraging student collaboration, enabling students to elaborate on their individual ideas, challenging thinking by presenting contradictions to students' ideas, promoting analysis and inquiry through questioning, allowing *wait time* during discussions and questioning, providing ample time for student thinking and processing of ideas, encouraging self-reflection and metacognition, and organizing classroom curriculum around real-life problems.[74]

In Scripture, we see Jesus implementing many of these concepts. For example, he allowed listeners to think and investigate to discover answers, he served as a guide allowing for (student) voice, listeners were required to assign meaning to parables, listeners were involved in the learning process, he expected change based on new learning, and he was involved in collaborative dialogue.[75] Christian educators should seek to utilize many of these constructivist methods for design and instruction.

A Piagetian aspect of constructivism focuses on social interaction and disequilibrium. According to Piaget, "People learn when they struggle with problems in a social setting."[76] In a church setting, interacting with people who have differing perspectives can lead to an interesting disequilibrium, and in turn, they will see and learn things they never realized in Scripture based on these tensions.[77] Jesus often avoided truth declarations. He used the concept of disequilibrium or "perspective transformation" to enable listeners to wrestle with the dissonance between cultural norms and values compared with those of the kingdom of God and move them toward a kingdom mindset.[78]

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[74] Roso, "Constructivism in the Classroom," 39-40 (emphasis original).

[75] Rhonda Sommers-Johnson, "Did Jesus Utilize Constructivist Teaching Practices?," in Lee, *Faith-Based Education That Constructs,* 136.

[76] Plueddemann, "The Power of Piaget," 51.

[77] Plueddemann, "The Power of Piaget," 51.

[78] HeeKap Lee, "Three Faces of Constructivism," in Lee, *Faith-Based Education That Constructs,* 58.

James E. Plueddemann notes three constructivist based principles for Christian educators: (1) "people do not learn the most important things by sitting in a pew and taking notes from one-way communication"; (2) "education that merely fosters passive reception of information will seldom develop people"; and (3) "we grow as we wrestle with the issues and problems of life in light of the Word of God."[79] Similarly, Thorne states that "constructivism calls for individually transformed information. The information must be engaged. All forms of Constructivism argue that the learner must individually discover and transform information in order to make it the individual's own."[80] He adds, "Biblical education also says that the learner must individually discover and transform information in order to make it personal."[81]

Ron Ritchhart echoes many of these ideas as he discusses creating cultures of thinking within classrooms. He proposes that "transformative learning—that is, learning that cultivates the development of the whole person and strives for more than simple transmission of information—is more likely to happen in community than in isolation."[82] In Christian education, this community not only includes the church and small groups within the church but also involves ensuring that within such a community there is discussion and wrestling with valuable ideas and scriptural understating to promote the transformative goal of Christlikeness.

According to Richard E. Butman and David R. Moore, there are several signs of a constructed knower: they are known by their humility and empathy, passion, and compassion; possess "firm yet flexible commitments"; put beliefs into action; strive to

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[79] Plueddemann, "The Power of Piaget," 59.

[80] Thorne, "Biblical Education," 105.

[81] Thorne, "Biblical Education," 105.

[82] Ron Ritchhart, *Creating Cultures of Thinking: The 8 Forces We Must Master to Truly Transform Our Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 203.

serve and empower others; and find value in community and diversity.[83] A constructivist Christian is capable of living a life transformed through the work, understanding, and power of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Faith-Based Constructivism: A Biblical Integration

While Christian education seems to lean toward two extremes (mindless memorization of facts or emotion-based activity that neglects Scripture), effective Christian education is true to Scripture and relevant to the individual's interests and needs.[84] Scripture is not only the final authority but also the filter to examine all other truths.[85] As discussed, constructivism seeks to meet the learner's needs, interests, and mode for creating understanding that is transferrable and transformative. Therefore, in creating a faith-based model of constructivism, these positive aspects must be filtered through a reliance on the Word of God, a belief in the authority and truthfulness of Scripture, and God's revelation of truth.

Trentham states, "The social sciences must be approached and qualified with theological conviction, clarity, and wisdom. And they must be engaged and appropriated accordingly."[86] Trentham's "principle of inverse consistency" provides Christian scholars and educators with a hermeneutical framework to "*engage* and *appropriate* social science models of human development" through a four-step protocol:[87] scholars and educators (1) envision redemptive maturity, (2) read for receptivity, (3) apply reflective discernment,

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[83] Richard E. Butman and David R. Moore, "The Power of Perry and Belenky," in Wilhoit and Dettoni, *Nurture That Is Christian*, 116.

[84] Plueddemann, "The Power of Piaget," 47.

[85] Robert W. Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 58.

[86] Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 1)," 458-75.

[87] John David Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2): Engaging and Appropriating Models of Human Development," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (2019): 476-77 (emphasis original).

and (4) identify appropriate outlets.[88] James R. Estep Jr. agrees that Christian educators "cannot be just students of theology; we also must be students of the social sciences."[89] We cannot reject the value of social science in understanding faith and spiritual development. As Ward argues, "No one has the picture altogether fully formed yet, but the future of theory for Christian education seems sure to be an informed synthesis of theological rudiments and scientific evidences."[90] In providing a similar suggestion with additional structure, John Dettoni and Jim Wilhoit assert that "biblical and theological reflection must be the means to ascertain Truth and meaning from empirical data."[91] They recommend learning from developmental theories yet reading critically to discern proper contributions for growth into Christlikeness.[92]

As an example of the previous beliefs in integrating social sciences with biblical theology, Karen Estep claims that "the general notion of constructivism need not be rejected wholesale, since it does provide insight into how the individual within a given social context facilitates the learning process, and provides methods whereby learners can teach themselves."[93] Dave S. Knowlton states that from a biblical form of constructivism, "construction is not creating something new; it is putting together ideas in a personally meaningful and honest way."[94] The basic premise of faith-based constructivism is the ideology that we are constructing a kingdom heart, a Christlike perspective, a life transformed into the image of Jesus through the understanding of Scripture.

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[88] Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2)," 488-93.

[89] James R. Estep Jr., "Developmental Theories: Foe, Friend, or Folly? The Role of Developmental Theories in Christian Formation," in Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation,* 58.

[90] Ward, foreword to *Nurture That Is Christian,* 14.

[91] Dettoni and Wilhoit, introduction to *Nurture That Is Christian*, 41.

[92] Dettoni and Wilhoit, introduction to *Nurture That Is Christian*, 41.

[93] Estep, "Following Topographical Details," 111.

[94] Knowlton, "Shifting Towards a Constructivist Philosophy," 121.

Constructivists understand and rely on differing perspectives among individuals. From a biblical stance, Scripture also supports the idea of multiple perspectives. In fact, transformation begins with awareness of one's own perspective (self-centered by nature) and—through the understanding of Scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit—changes into a Christlike perspective.

A Faith-Based Constructivist Approach for Transformational Teaching

Although constructivist methodology promotes and fosters the end goal of transference of knowledge and understanding, the intention is ultimately to transfer learning across content areas or to create truth. Biblical transformation differs from this sense of a transfer goal: the goal is to read and interpret Scripture not for the sake of information but transformation.[95] This difference is illuminated in the Christian's pursuit of spiritual transformation involving personal and joint engagement with Scripture for transformation.[96] Mark Rutter notes that although we live in a culture with an abundance of churches and Christian literature, "the lives of Christians are not necessarily being transformed."[97] He states that learning is not just knowing but acting on knowledge, and the goal of a Christian educator is to teach for this transformation through holistic means.[98]

David Setran and fellow Wheaton College professors share the results from a Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) report on spirituality among collegians. The HERI study claims that spiritual growth is best facilitated when students are involved in self-reflection and contemplation, or "inner-work," along with the teacher's

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[95] Mark A. Maddix, "Spiritual Formation and Christian Formation," in Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 256.

[96] Maddix, "Spiritual Formation," 257.

[97] Mark V. Rutter, "A Holistic Approach to Learning: The Key to Change," *Christian Education Journal* 10, no. 3 (1990): 63.

[98] Rutter, "A Holistic Approach," 63, 71.

encouragement in the spiritual transformation process.[99] In response to this finding, the authors suggest creating assignments for students that engage them in "inner-work" that fosters engagement with God and spiritual formation.[100]

Setran et al. also recommend that learning should be reflected upon, enacted on, prayed over, and discussed so that it begins to shape student habits, commitments, and desires. For this reason, educators must be intentional about designing instruction that not only transmits information and content but also seeks to influence lasting desires and attitudes through the learning process.[101] Likewise, Pazmiño warns of the dangers in an educational approach that imposes truths yet does not allow students the opportunity to wrestle with the implications of such truths.[102]

Similarly, Mark A. Maddix discusses instruction focused on biblical understanding for spiritual formation:

> In reading the Bible; we seek to allow the text to become the intrusion of the Word of God into our lives, to address us, encounter us. We allow the text to inform us rather than inform the text. Formational reading allows the text to master us instead of us mastering the text. We come to the text with an openness to hear, receive, respond, and be a servant of the Word rather than a master of the text.[103]

Pazmiño adds,

> Such an imposition is manipulative indoctrination, and it does not result in personal appropriation, internalization, and the transfer of learning to other situations. Such an authoritarian stance in education demands mindless compliance and obedience at the loss of personal integrity and rationality. It reduces the response of loving obedience to God to a superficial conformity that is contrary to a biblical understanding of persons. A mindless and spiritless focus on the written Word may not result in vital contact with the living Word, Jesus Christ. The spirit of the Word

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[99] David P. Setran et al., "Spiritual Formation Goes to College: Class-Related 'Soul Projects' in Christian Higher Education," *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (2010): 401.

[100] Setran et al., "Spiritual Formation Goes to College," 401.

[101] Setran et al., "Spiritual Formation Goes to College," 407.

[102] Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 59.

[103] Maddix, "Spiritual Formation," 257.

> can be lost in haggling over the letter of the Word with a subsequent loss of vitality and joy.[104]

Transformational Teaching: A Perspective Shift

For transformational learning to lead students through sanctification into Christ's likeness, students must be led by lessons designed to explore the perspective of Jesus. Jack Mezirow describes transformational learning as a change of perspective centered on three main themes: critical reflection of assumptions, awareness of one's current perspective, and rational discourse in determining validity in other assertions.[105] A humanistic worldview is inherited from our culture, and Christians must begin to reject this worldview, embrace biblical concepts and purpose, and learn to evaluate life from a biblical perspective.[106] In faith-based education, transformational teaching and learning similarly promote these three phases as students learn to see and reflect on their original perspective compared to that of Jesus as they discover meaning in Scripture.

According to Stephen Brookfield, a main component of the critical thinking required for true learning is realizing that alternative ways of thinking exist.[107] Brookfield refers to the idea of a "perspective transformation," as he describes this realization of new perspectives. He advocates for teaching geared toward critical thinking and adds that critical teaching helps students to "acquire new perceptual frameworks and structures of understanding."[108] As Christian educators aim to promote student thinking that leads to the enlightenment of a Christlike perspective and student transformation into Christlikeness, this concept of "perspective transformation" in learning is especially true.

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[104] Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 59.

[105] Jack Mezirow, "Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 1997, no. 4 (1997): 11.

[106] Anderson, "Adolescent Development," 168.

[107] Stephen D. Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinking: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 18.

[108] Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinking*, 82.

Curriculum designers must understand the goal of Christian formation and the profile of a mature believer, help students envision where they stand concerning that profile, encourage the spiritual disciplines involved in developing into the desired profile, and develop a curriculum that intentionally ministers to Christian formation in this manner.[109] Gregory C. Carlson adds, "A major element in transformation of ideas, of attitudes, of behavior patterns is the personal interactive involvement of the one being transformed"; "we must focus on internal life change rather than just external behavior change."[110] For this to occur, Carlson suggests that our teaching must be more than merely telling; it must include actively involving students in learning.[111]

More than seeking pieces of information to understand the Christian faith, we must engage students by challenging and confronting their current life in comparison to the desired life of Christ.[112] Mezirow discusses the importance of critical reflection assumptions (CRA) in the learning process, which involves reflecting on current life assumptions in order to promote change. Although he specifically addresses adult learning in a secular manner, this concept is applicable to teen learning as well as Christian education. CRA plays an important role in decision-making, validating beliefs, and transformational learning.[113] Mezirow states, "When the object of critical reflection is an assumption or presupposition, a different order of abstraction is introduced, with major potential for effecting a change in one's established frame of reference."[114] Essentially, this is the essence of Christian education—to promote awareness and

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[109] Gregory C. Carlson, "Adult Development and Christian Formation," in Estep and Kim, *Christian Formation*, 221-23.

[110] Carlson, "Adult Development and Christian Formation," 226.

[111] Carlson, "Adult Development and Christian Formation," 226.

[112] Carlson, "Adult Development and Christian Formation," 255.

[113] Jack Mezirow, "On Critical Reflection," *Adult Education Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (1998): 185.

[114] Mezirow, "On Critical Reflection," 185.

transformation into Christlikeness and adopting his perspective. Mezirow concludes by arguing, "The professional task ahead is to find ways to translate the concept of CRA and discourse into curricula or programs, instructional methods, material development, and evaluation criteria."[115]

Correspondingly, Pazmiño proposes that curriculum should provide students time and space to explore, discuss, and connect the content in order to transfer and meaningfully integrate new insights. [116] He states, "The most common experience in teaching is that so much content is shared at the metaphoric table that students have little or no time to chew and digest the food."[117] Research on adult learning, which can also be beneficial for understanding teen learning, suggests that learning occurs when the learner feels respected, can relate new learning to experiences in life, and can use the new learning immediately.[118] Research also shows that learning comes from 20 percent of what is heard, 40 percent of what is heard and seen, and 80 percent of what is done or discovered by the learner.[119] Curriculum must be designed with the intentionality of purposefully placing time and space for students to process important content through meaningful tasks and questions.

Creating a Culture of Thinking and Discussion

Creating a thinking climate is essential for growth and Christlike transformation. Roehlkepartain states, "When people come to church, do they shut off their brains? Are they spoon-fed simple answers to tough questions? Can people come

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[115] Mezirow, "On Critical Reflection," 185.

[116] Robert W. Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education: An Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 111.

[117] Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education*, 111.

[118] Jane Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 34.

[119] Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, 34.

and just sit passively? Or are they challenged to think about faith in new ways? Unless the latter is true, it's likely that people will stagnate in their faith."[120]

Transference of learning is dependent upon a classroom culture centered on quality thinking and discussion. Yvonne Botma presents a conceptual framework for instructional design that promotes a learning-centered classroom culture and transferrable learning. This framework involves first providing a real-world scenario to increase student interest. Next, students are introduced to inquiry, and they begin to incorporate prior knowledge. In the next phase, students are viewed as a community of learners with an emphasis on discussion-based practices involving "productive struggle" for students and active intellectual engagement.[121]

In order to promote a classroom dynamic that is discussion-based and thought-provoking, Daniel Haase presents the phrase "death of the professor" to illustrate the concept of a learning-centered approach to education whereby the teacher uses his or her knowledge and wisdom to become a lead learner and creator of dialogue as opposed to the deliverer of information.[122] Haase adds that "the design bears the burden," as he describes the teacher's shifting role in creating lesson designs in a way that values the learners and the learning more than the lecture.[123] This design includes lessons built for dialogue, which is not merely for the sake of conversation but also to create "rigorous and thoughtful engagement built around structured tasks designed for learning."[124] Haase argues, "Too often the design defaults to lecture with the assumption that if the teacher

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[120] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 61.

[121] Yvonne Botma, "A Conceptual Framework for Educational Design at Modular Level to Promote Transfer of Learning," *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 52, no. 5 (2015): 504-6.

[122] Daniel T. Haase, "The Death of the Professor: A Case for Dialogue Education," *Common Ground Journal* 11, no. 2 (2014): 45.

[123] Haase, "The Death of the Professor," 47.

[124] Haase, "The Death of the Professor," 47.

speaks it, it is known," which turns students into "containers" or vessels "to be filled by the teacher."[125]

Ritchhart similarly describes a classroom atmosphere where "a group's collective as well as individuals' thinking is valued, visible, and actively promoted as part of the regular, day-to-day experiences of all group members."[126] He provides a list of "shapers" in creating this culture of thinking: high student interest; a shared vision of learning; value and respect for all input; constant questioning; the teacher's leading the engagement, learning, and monitoring the conversation; active listening; open communication; time for thinking, responding, and developing ideas; trust and safety for all; and valuable learning that is directly connected to life.[127] Teachers and curriculum designers should create opportunities for engagement "to challenge misconceptions, to delve deeply, to explore, to create meaning, to think," and—in turn—to learn.[128] Haase adds that when learners are interested in the topic and discussion, they are empowered to participate as active learners and thinkers. They become internally motivated, benefitting from a sense of joy in the learning process.[129]

According to Jane Vella, student "engagement is ensured by the immediacy of the learning task, which relates to the immediacy of the course objective that the task is implementing. Without this engagement, learners simply cannot learn. Our job is to design effective achievement-based objectives—and correspondingly learning tasks and materials."[130] Contrast this image with Lois LeBar's discouraging observations of many classrooms throughout her time of research:

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[125] Haase, "The Death of the Professor," 46.

[126] Ritchhart, *Creating Cultures of Thinking*, 31.

[127] Ritchhart, *Creating Cultures of Thinking*, 4.

[128] Ritchhart, *Creating Cultures of Thinking*, 143.

[129] Ritchhart, *Creating Cultures of Thinking*, 45.

[130] Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, 37.

> How do our young people leave their Sunday School classrooms on Sunday morning? With eyes sparkling with new vision and insight? With serious determination to practice the will of God? With chin up ready to face an unbelieving world in the power of the spirit? With deep questions about God himself? Too often they are glad for the release from a dull, boring session.[131]

Effective Questioning and Discussion

A classroom culture based on engagement, thinking, and deep learning is dependent on excellent questioning and discussion techniques. Effective questioning and discussion are based on three elements: the quality of the questions or prompts, discussion techniques, and student participation.[132] However, effective discussion does not just happen but requires intentionality and commitment. It does not occur through the IRE (initiate, respond, and evaluate) recitation model where the teacher serves as the "pivot point" and is looking for one "right" answer, calls on only one student, and evaluates the student response.[133]

Effective discussion is a result of excellent planning and creativity and the questioning skills of teachers and students. Jackie Acree Walsh and Beth Dankert Sattes state,

> Ultimately, effective discussion depends on the knowledge and skills of those involved, which in classrooms are the students. However, most students do not come to school with the skills required for questioning and discussion. Therefore, teachers must plan for and model the use of questioning that leads to effective discussion.[134]

Walsh and Sattes add that effective questioning must involve questions capable of sustaining student thinking, promoting the participation and intellectual engagement of all students, scaffolding for deep thinking and understanding, and creating a culture that

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[131] Lois E. LeBar, *Education That Is Christian* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1995), 21.

[132] Jackie Acree Walsh and Beth Dankert Sattes, *Questioning for Classroom Discussion: Purposeful Speaking, Engaged Listening, Deep Thinking* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2015), 4.

[133] Walsh and Sattes, *Questioning for Classroom Discussion*, 8.

[134] Walsh and Sattes, *Questioning for Classroom Discussion*, 16.

promotes and encourages respectful dialogue.[135] Quality questioning empowers student engagement and is essential for quality discussion. Through quality discussions, teachers can transform classrooms into a community of "purposeful speaking, engaged listening, and deep thinking."[136]

Teaching through discussion improves learning by helping students explore and appreciate different perspectives, increasing student awareness of complexity, assisting students in acknowledging and investigating assumptions, increasing students' intellectual agility, helping connect students to topics, developing collaborative learning, and helping students to empathize, synthesize, and integrate ideas—all of which leads to transformation.[137] Vella suggests utilizing small group discussions because small groups provide a safe sharing environment and remove the stereotypical "all-knowing" teacher and passive learners.[138]

Deeper Learning

According to leading education expert Jay McTighe and Harvey Silver, educators must "make the critical shift from providing information to students (a knowledge consumption model) to empowering students to become active meaning-makers who seek deep understanding and are able to transfer their learning."[139] The authors describe the difference in *inert* knowledge that is acquired superficially, never understood, and forgotten quickly to deep learning that is truly understood and retained.

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[135] Walsh and Sattes, *Questioning for Classroom Discussion*, 17.

[136] Walsh and Sattes, *Questioning for Classroom Discussion*, 13.

[137] Stephen D. Brookfield and Stephen Preskill, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 22-23.

[138] Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, 35.

[139] Jay McTighe and Harvey F. Silver, *Teaching for Deeper Learning: Tools to Engage Students in Meaning Making* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2020), xiii.

McTighe and Silver describe deep learning as something that must be "earned" and cannot be transmitted by teachers simply telling; it must be constructed by the learner.[140]

Jay McTighe and Judy Willis clearly depict the difference in deep learning and knowledge without deep understanding. Evidence of knowledge without understanding includes that ability to repeat what was told, remember, plug in information, and provide correct answers. However, indicators of deep learning include the ability to explain thoroughly, teach others, transfer new learning, provide support and justification for arguments, interpret meanings, and produce new questions.[141]

McTighe and Silver also suggest seven thinking skills that promote deep learning and meaning-making: conceptualization, note-making and summarizing (much different from note-taking), comparing, reading for understanding, predicting and hypothesizing, visualizing and graphic representations, and perspective-taking and empathizing.[142] These skills are essential to valuable thinking and high-achieving learners, they are often under-taught, and they provide teachers a manageable way to increase student learning.[143] McTighe and Silver recommend designing curriculum around big ideas using essential questions that relate to student interest and a focus on assessment that targets desired student understanding and the means by which students will demonstrate this understanding.[144] LeBar combines progressive principles balanced with a biblical foundation to similarly argue for essential questions that are relevant to student need. She states, "If the pupils are genuinely concerned about it, they will put

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[140] McTighe and Silver, *Teaching for Deeper Learning*, 1.

[141] Jay McTighe and Judy Willis, *Upgrade Your Teaching: Understanding by Design Meets Neuroscience* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2019), 13.

[142] McTighe and Silver, *Teaching for Deeper Learning*, 2.

[143] McTighe and Silver, *Teaching for Deeper Learning*, 3.

[144] McTighe and Silver, *Teaching for Deeper Learning*, 114-16.

forth effort to find God's solution. We can then direct them to the Scripture that provides the clearest answer and is closest to their experience."[145]

Assessment and Feedback

While transference of learning is dependent upon a classroom culture centered on quality thinking and discussion, assessment and feedback must continually accompany such goals to ensure their effectiveness. Although assessment has always played a crucial role in education, it has typically come in the form of tests and grades—signaling the end of instruction. Educators have recently begun to recognize that assessment actually encompasses more than this, playing a much larger role in instruction.[146] Danielson states, "Rather than signaling the *end* of instruction, it [assessment] has become incorporated as an integral *part* of instruction. Teachers have found that assessment is a highly valuable tool in their instructional repertoire; through a skillful use of formative assessment, teachers promote learning."[147] Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe similarly state, "Because understanding develops as a result of ongoing inquiry and rethinking, the assessment of understanding should be thought of in terms of a collection of evidence over time instead of an 'event'—a single moment-in-time test at the end of instruction—as so often happens in practice."[148]

Assessment is now recognized as a teacher's continuous monitoring of student engagement, effectiveness of materials, plans, and student understanding so that modifications and mid-course corrections can be made if necessary. More so, students can begin to assume responsibility for monitoring their own progress and understanding

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[145] Lois LeBar, "Planning for Teaching," in Graendorf, *Introduction to Biblical Christian Education*, 171.

[146] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 86.

[147] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 86 (emphasis original).

[148] Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2005), 247.

in order to take necessary action.[149] This type of student responsibility fosters life-long learning and the mind-set necessary for perspective transformation into the likeness of Christ.

Teachers should prepare specific forms of assessment into their lesson design to elicit evidence of student learning so that modifications can be made.[150] Effective formative assessments (viz., ongoing assessments *for* learning) must be intentionally planned in lesson design to provide vital diagnostic information.[151] This includes the use of timely, accurate, and specific feedback for all students through teachers, peers, activities, materials, problems, or technology.[152] Without proper assessment and feedback, teachers and students remain unaware of students' ability to achieve the targeted goals, misunderstandings remain hidden or unaddressed, and a lack of critical understanding and transformation may occur.

This shift from assessment signaling the of end learning to assessment as part of and for learning is reflected in the FFT in Domain 1 and Domain 3. Component 1E (Designing coherent instruction) and component 3D (Using assessment in instruction) both reflect the importance of assessment and feedback in effective teaching and learning. Although church curricula have typically steered away from assessment and feedback as it was previously regarded as tests and grades that are not utilized in church education, the continuous monitoring of student understanding as part of learning and essential feedback must be incorporated in lesson design and instruction. As Christian educators strive to promote transferable understanding for Christlike understanding, assessment and feedback must be included in curricula for church education.

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[149] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 86.

[150] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 86.

[151] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 62.

[152] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 87.

A Faith-Based Constructivist Curriculum for Transformational Teaching

I have established the goal of Christian education and a faith-based constructivist approach for transformational learning. Next, a curriculum design method must be established that delivers the necessary foundation for teachers and volunteers to follow as they instruct students in this manner. A balanced curriculum should be relevant to student engagement and rigorously designed for student understanding and transformation. According to Wilhoit, the goal of education is to promote meaningful learning, not simply learning meaningful material. He defines meaningful learning as being marked by three features: (1) students see the big picture and then form understanding of the individual lesson, which leads to an understanding of the big picture; (2) students understand the importance and significance of the information; and (3) students relate new learning to previous knowledge.[153] Furthermore, learning should be transferred beyond the initial information through deep learning, problem-solving, and application—or it is likely to be forgotten.[154] Curriculum should be designed to promote this type of balanced and meaningful learning.

Deficient Curriculum Design

As opposed to a balanced approach, Christian education often has two unhealthy extremes: (1) mindless knowledge acquisition and fact-based learning or (2) an "emotion-filled philosophy" that neglects Scripture.[155] Curriculum should promote a healthy balance of rigorous and relevant Christian education based on the Word of God. Pazmiño argues that "too many published curricula have relied exclusively upon

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[153] Jones Neal, "The Power of Vygotsky," 133.

[154] Mary Alice Gunter, Thomas E. Estes, and Susan L. Mintz, *Instruction: A Models Approach*, 5th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2007), 5.

[155] Plueddemann, "The Power of Piaget," 47.

behavioral objectives, assuming that they alone encompass the content of teaching."[156] He recommends a holistic approach that includes problem-solving and expressive activities.[157] Jones Neal similarly suggests that curriculum for Christian education should be examined to promote conceptual understanding as opposed to rote memorization. As a reflection of Vygotskian theories, she adds that "collaborative participation in learning within the zone of proximal development" and appropriate scaffolding are essential tools for Christian education.[158]

On the other side of the unhealthy pendulum, Gorman proposes that symbolism or so called "object lessons" may often hold students' interest, but in the end students are more concerned with the visual or "magic" involved. They become more interested in the "how" of the activity than the principle it intended to teach, resulting in a lack of transformation.[159] Through both examples, Christian education falls short in propelling students toward the intended goal. Although Christian curriculum, like that of its secular textbook and workbook counterpart, "fails to engage students in cognitively demanding tasks, little has been done to alleviate this shortcoming," and it continues to "embody a widely held misconception: that teaching is primarily the delivery of information and that learning is memorization of that information."[160]

Curriculum and Secular Education

Grant Wiggins labels the "sin" in curriculum design as taking a complex whole, separating it into small chunks, creating a rigid sequence of instruction based on

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[156] Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education*, 101.

[157] Pazmiño, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education*, 101.

[158] Jones Neal, "The Power of Vygotsky," 131. Vygotskian theory plays a major role in constructive principles, specifically social constructivism.

[159] Gorman, "Children and Developmentalism," 148-49.

[160] Ritchhart, *Creating Cultures of Thinking*, 151.

these small pieces, and calling completion of this arrangement "mastery."[161] He argues that this popular style of curriculum design leads to fractured, boring, and ineffective learning that lacks the power of transference. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe similarly argue that conventional curriculum is often "divorced from the ultimate accomplishments desired."[162] In other words, curriculum is designed without an end in mind, lacking a constant eye on the overall vision for the unit and for transformation.

Wiggins and McTighe argue that traditional curriculum "is a chief impediment to effective schooling and school reform" and that, instead, curriculum should be designed from a different foundation and desired outputs and long-term accomplishments. The authors suggest a backward-design model reflective of transfer goals and worthy tasks requiring students to use content wisely.[163] Wiggins adds that reducing learning to facts and skills is "tempting, common, and harmful," yet without a sound vision and criteria for effective curriculum design, change is unlikely.[164]

Curriculum and Educational Ministry

While many teachers are responsible for curriculum design in secular education, Roehlkepartain state that a large percentage of untrained youth education teachers are relying strictly on packaged curriculum. Yet, is church curriculum currently designed in a manner worthy of bearing this load? Roehlkepartain suggests that it most likely is not. He claims that research indicates that teachers should become more like facilitators of learning who promote learning and growth in themselves and their students instead of being the "all-knowing" database. However, this is not how curriculum is

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[161] Grant Wiggins, "How Good Is Good Enough?," *Educational Leadership* 71, no. 4 (2014): 11.

[162] Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Schooling by Design: Mission, Action, and Achievement* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2007), 42.

[163] Wiggins and McTighe, *Schooling by Design*, 37.

[164] Wiggins, "How Good Is Good Enough?," 12.

written. Roehlkepartain adds that very few curriculum publishers emphasize this truth in their curriculum design. For example, most curricula written for Sunday school give the teacher detailed information on the topic and Scripture but give no instruction to the students.[165] As a result, unless teachers are trained to recognize this deficiency and adapt lessons accordingly, the teacher becomes the "expert," and students become passive listeners.

Robert Zais suggests that curriculum design should maintain an alignment and a positive "relationship among the four components of curriculum; aims, goals, and objectives; content; learning activities; and evaluation."[166] James Wilhoit adds that curriculum could be improved by promoting better use of the biblical text without fearing interpretation and by bridging the text to the student's life in a more powerful way.[167]

Curriculum Goals

Curriculum must support the transformational vision of Christian education. Coley argues, "Meaningful engagement that leads to transformational learning seldom occurs by accident, but it can be a significant part of each instructional episode through systematic planning."[168] A curriculum designed for transformation with faith-based constructivist principles serving as its foundational pillars reflects a well-balanced mixture of student-centered interest and engagement with a content-focused understanding of Scripture, creating a learning-centered model of education. In a curriculum such as this, one would expect biblically cohesive aspects of constructivist methodology and intentional consideration of situations and topics relevant to students in

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[165] Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 147.

[166] Robert S. Zais, *Curriculum: Principles and Foundations* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 439.

[167] James C. Wilhoit, "The Illusion of Change in Curriculum," *Christian Education Journal* 8, no. 1 (1987): 29.

[168] Coley, "Educational Methodology," 121.

order to build student understanding and transformation. This type of curriculum facilitates "the construction of knowledge by including opportunities for meaningful and authentic exploration, by designing engaging activities, and by utilizing interactive group work."[169]

This curriculum includes the aspects of community, collaborative participation, and dialogue.[170] It involves the aspect of productive struggle, which allows students to wrestle with concepts to build understanding, raises relevant problems that promote student inquiry, and gives students a purpose for reading or a task as they actively engage while Scripture is read.[171] While traditional classrooms are typically dominated by questions focused on procedures and review, to facilitate cultures of thinking, teacher questions should shift to constructive questions that guide and direct student understanding.[172] By writing questions into curriculum geared toward this type of constructivist thinking and allowing time for students to think and discuss in pairs or small groups, designers promote visible thinking and active intellectual engagement.

Curriculum design should reflect the desired outcomes of understanding and critical thinking.[173] Furthermore, assignments should clearly require students to question and thoughtfully pursue big ideas, not simply passively learn the content.[174] If basic content coverage is promoted in the curriculum design, then in-depth student thinking and inquiry will be optional at best and possibly even a distraction.[175] According to

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[169] Espinor, "Overview of Learning Theories," 14.

[170] Jones Neal, "The Power of Vygotsky," 131.

[171] Gorman, "Children and Developmentalism," 152-53.

[172] Ritchhart, *Creating Cultures of Thinking*, 222.

[173] Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins, *Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2013), 82.

[174] McTighe and Wiggins, *Essential Questions*, 69.

[175] McTighe and Wiggins, *Essential Questions*, 83.

McTighe and Wiggins, well-written curriculum should align with overall goals and vision, point to long-term transfer goals, focus on transferrable big ideas, involve relevant and thought-provoking essential questions, include authentic and transfer-reliant tasks, and align all activities and assignments with the overall unit goals.[176] The authors also suggests that between 20 and 50 percent of class time should be devoted to in-depth collaborative inquiry discussion, and this time must be allocated for when designing curriculum and lesson plans.[177] Good discussion is currently a rarity, and discussion accounts for only 3 percent of K-12 classroom instructional time.[178] In describing the neuroscience behind these suggestions, McTighe and Willis explain that learning activities planned through a backward-design model using essential questions and authentic tasks "build and expand the cognitive networks needed for conceptual understanding and transfer."[179]

Evaluating Church Curriculum

I have presented a vision for Christian education: a faith-based constructivist approach to instruction and curriculum design, with curriculum and instruction designed for thinking and understanding, deep learning, and the transfer of learning for transformation. However, is curriculum for Christian education currently designed in the manner described, and how do we know? Is the current curriculum available to evangelical churches truly promoting the vision for Christian education and the thinking climate described? When looking at evaluation in education, assessments focus

[176] McTighe and Wiggins, *Essential Questions*, 106-7.

[177] McTighe and Wiggins, *Essential Questions*, 93.

[178] Walsh and Sattes, *Questioning for Classroom Discussion*, 6.

[179] McTighe and Willis, *Upgrade Your Teaching*, 13.

dominantly on student attainment of objectives, and rarely does evaluation consist of a comprehensive curriculum assessment.[180]

Scholarly research reveals that a study and evaluation of curriculum used in churches is desperately needed and specifically calls for consideration of instructional issues that could lead to better learning experiences.[181] However, the research is limited regarding the evaluation of church small group curriculum and the instructional effectiveness of existing published curricula. In fact, after reviewing a selection of books, articles, and dissertations in the area of curriculum and evaluation, I only discovered a very few studies that provide a foundation for this work.

The available research literature in this area fails to specifically address the research concern I have expressed. Although a few dissertations reference church curriculum evaluation, the work is mostly focused on creating a guidance tool for churches looking to purchase packaged curriculum. These evaluation tools focus on factors such as theological accuracy, specific church needs, ease of use, extra resources, and visual appeal.[182] Stacie Reck argues that while consumer-focused evaluations are available and valuable for some, critical evaluation of curriculum has been largely overlooked.[183] Dennis Williams similarly argues that "evaluation of curriculum resources too often has focused more on superficial features. Such items as cost, durability and

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[180] Zais, *Curriculum*, 369.

[181] Dennis E. Williams, "Curriculum Planning for Evangelical Churches" (unpublished manuscript, Denver, CO, 1992), 3-4; Stacie Reck, "Colouring with Brown Crayons: Evaluating Religious Education Curriculum" (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 2008), 12-13, 24.

[182] Burben W. Sullins III, "The Importance of Evaluating Children's Small-Group Curriculum, Kindergarten-Sixth Grade at Churches in Albuquerque, New Mexico" (DEdMin project, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017) [this dissertation focuses on the evaluation of available published curricula according to specific church visions or needs]; Amanda Kathryn Cooley, "Curriculum Resource Evaluation in Southern Baptist Churches in the State of North Carolina" (EdD thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), xv-4 [this dissertation also focuses on evaluation of curricula for meeting the needs of churches and developmental needs of students].

[183] Reck, "Colouring with Brown Crayons," 24-25.

aesthetic appeal have taken on more importance than the educational concerns like the principles of learning and the type of methodology promoted and suggested."[184]

Williams's unpublished manuscript "Curriculum Planning for Evangelical Churches" discusses many aspects of curriculum, curriculum planning, and curriculum evaluation, and it culminates with a tool for evaluating factors relating to instructional effectiveness, design and physical appearance, philosophy, culture, society, content, and use of the Bible.[185] A tool such as this is very exhaustive and beneficial; however, the instructional portion was specifically targeted for the purposes of this research study. To address instructional effectiveness of a selected curricula, Williams created a nineteen-question assessment utilizing a 1-5 rating scale for each question. While this is helpful in addressing a breadth of curriculum factors, the scope of coverage limits the depth of information specifically to instruction. This type of assessment is subjective because there is no criteria or suggested examples for obtaining a certain score. Consequently, this assessment serves in a summative manner—similar to an autopsy report—instead of a formative manner—similar to a diagnostic preventative check-up. Therefore, the evaluation tool is limited to evaluating curricula for the purpose of evaluation only as opposed to formatively evaluating *for* curriculum improvement and guiding future curriculum development.

Reck's dissertation "Colouring with Brown Crayons: Evaluating Religious Curriculum" focused on utilizing existing curriculum evaluation tools from Mary Boys, current research, and existing evaluation tools in order to create an overarching curriculum analysis tool.[186] This tool evaluated curriculum in the following areas: religious and educational beliefs, appropriateness for a particular setting, and evaluation

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[184] Williams, "Curriculum Planning for Evangelical Churches," 89.

[185] Williams, "Curriculum Planning for Evangelical Churches."

[186] Reck, "Colouring with Brown Crayons," 49-51.

sensitivity to race and culture.[187] Reck concluded by testing this meta-analysis evaluation tool on a familiar curriculum and recorded findings as well as modifications. When utilizing the new evaluation tool, she noted several instructional deficiencies. First, the curriculum was teacher-centered, as the teacher served as the deliverer of facts and the students' main task was to receive information.[188] Reck also noted that correct answers were provided to questions, insinuating that there was little room for student discovery and little attention to an atmosphere of discussion.[189]

Reck argues that "more attention to in-depth pedagogical questions might strengthen the material" and that "the application of educational theory to religious education is crucial and 'should' be included among the many possible components of an evaluation of Christian Religious Education curriculum."[190] In conclusion, Reck notes that the lack of curriculum evaluation shows that Christians have been "uncritical" about their work, and it has "left us in some cases weaker and the curriculum products of our endeavor less that effective."[191] She adds that "we have not yet utilized the knowledge of broader educational theories and critiques in ways that have shaped our own work for the better."[192]

Howard Hendricks suggests, "We test the effectiveness of your teaching not by what you do, but by what the student does as a result of what you do."[193] Zais similarly argues that curriculum evaluation includes the written curriculum document as well as the implemented curriculum, such as the interactions with students, materials, and the

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[187] Reck, "Colouring with Brown Crayons," 49-51.

[188] Reck, "Colouring with Brown Crayons," 134-35.

[189] Reck, "Colouring with Brown Crayons," 135-36.

[190] Reck, "Colouring with Brown Crayons," 158.

[191] Reck, "Colouring with Brown Crayons," 162.

[192] Reck, "Colouring with Brown Crayons," 162.

[193] Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 88.

environment. Because of the difficulties associated with an evaluation of the written curriculum, combined with the multiple interactions and factors involved in the instructional delivery using the curriculum, he concludes that a comprehensive curriculum evaluation cannot be proposed to measure all curricula.[194] Aligning with Zais's beliefs, I have intentionally omitted an assessment of the instructional delivery and interactions from this study, and written curriculum will be evaluated based on content and suggested instructional strategies within the written curriculum. Assuming the content's theological accuracy, can students learn, transfer, and apply the content based on the learning experiences designed in the written curriculum?

Jane Vella, Paula Berardinelli, and Jim Burrow describe five characteristics of effective evaluation. First, the evaluation should be objective and provide clear evidence indicating if the desired change is being targeted. Second, the important elements of an educational program should be identified for evaluation. Third, the evaluation should match the philosophy of the organization—or, in this case, the philosophy of and vision for Christian education. Fourth, the evaluation measurement should be identifiable and accessible. Fifth, the evaluation should focus on the outcomes as well as the process, consider questions such as "Did we accomplish our objective?" and "Did we accomplish them in an effective and efficient way?"[195]

Research indicates that the content of curriculum resources largely determines the actual instruction and that the curriculum affects not only *what* students learn but also *how well* they learn it.[196] While a small number of recent studies look at curriculum evaluation, an evaluative tool specifically targeting the transformational intent and vision

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[194] Zais, *Curriculum*, 378-79.

[195] Jane Vella, Paula Berardinelli, and Jim Burrow, *How Do They Know They Know? Evaluating Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 12.

[196] Williams, "Curriculum Planning for Evangelical Churches," 89-90.

of Christian education, potential for student understanding and transference of learning, and the potential for student engagement is necessary yet non-existent.

Church Curriculum Evaluation Components

To effectively assess whether curriculum has accomplished the main objectives in an effective and efficient way, evaluation methods must contain certain elements. First, curriculum evaluation should be directly linked to the intended purpose of Christian education.[197] Secondly, if the purpose of Christian education is to create Christlike transformation among students, does the curriculum provide learning opportunities that enable students to advance in the application of scriptural knowledge that is required for transformation?

Estep suggests that curriculum evaluation should present strengths and weaknesses in order to implement improvements.[198] He adds that in addition to evaluating what students know, as traditional models of evaluation suggest, it is also important that we use new forms of evaluation to assess students' progress developmentally.[199] Specifically for Christian education, this developmental progress would be spiritual maturity and Christlike transformation. An evaluation of the curriculum itself can offer insight into the curriculum's ability to assess students' developmental progress and, therefore, its ability to lead to spiritual maturity among students. Estep and Estep suggest that a curriculum's effectiveness can only be measured by life transformation, as it is often the connection between programs and people.[200]

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[197] Karen Lynn Estep, "Charting the Course: Curriculum Design," in Estep, White, and Estep, *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church*, 198.

[198] Estep, "Charting the Course," 198.

[199] Estep, "Charting the Course," 198.

[200] Karen Lynn Estep and James Riley Estep Jr, "Checking the Legend and Assessing the Journey: Curriculum Evaluation," in Estep, White, and Estep, *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church*, 205.

LeBar adds, “It is easy to feel successful when we have put on a smooth program, but the critical question is, what is happening to the people?”[201]

Estep and Estep recommend six dimensions of an exhaustive curriculum evaluation: (1) theory and purpose, (2) student learning, (3) program facilities and resources, (4) instructional methodology, (5) content and materials, and (6) teacher ability.[202] Although each component is important, for the purposes of this narrowed research effort, (1) theory and purpose and (5) content and materials are only explored to a small degree, and some components are not specifically discussed. However, student learning and instructional methodology are the focal point of this investigation. As opposed to evaluating student learning itself, this study focuses on the curriculum’s ability to lead to student learning and to discover what happens with students as an end product.[203] Instructional methodology “is the prescribed instructional method that connects the desired learning objective to the participant,” and it is also explored in depth in this study.[204]

Curriculum must be researched and evaluated often so that we can ensure that teaching promotes an understanding of God’s Word, is relevant to students’ needs, and helps move students toward the fullness of Christ.[205] Plueddemann states, “One of the best ways to improve the practice of Christian education in local churches is to do better curriculum evaluation, and do it more often.”[206] Estep and Estep add that we must evaluate curriculum to assess needs that remain unmet, determine current effectiveness,

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[201] LeBar, “Planning for Teaching,” 168.

[202] Estep and Estep, “Checking the Legend,” 205-12.

[203] Estep and Estep, “Checking the Legend,” 207.

[204] Estep and Estep, “Checking the Legend,” 209.

[205] Estep and Estep, “Checking the Legend,” 203.

[206] James. E. Plueddemann, “Curriculum Improvement through Evaluation,” *Christian Education Journal* 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 55.

and decide how it might be improved to meet the vision established for Christian education.[207] They describe curriculum evaluation as "the catalyst for change or improvement."[208] Quoting Roehlkepartain, Estep and Estep add that "changing times and changing needs will continue to require changing curricula."[209] While many authors argue for curriculum evaluations and suggest certain components of an evaluation, there is not currently an existing tool for such evaluation. Building on the work of Stacie Reck and her meta-analysis evaluation tool, I delve more deeply into the instructional component. I suggest that the Danielson Framework for Teaching offers an excellent evaluation of instructional effectiveness for Christian education curriculum.

Danielson Framework for Teaching: Addressing the Evaluation Gap

After establishing vision for Christian education (a faith-based model of constructivist education) and reviewing a compilation of research-based instructional practices, such as essential components for a culture of thinking, deeper learning, and effective questioning and discussion, Christian educators and curriculum designers need an evaluation tool that effectively assesses a curriculum's ability to incorporate these components. The Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT) is a framework for evaluation based on data from empirical and theoretical research promoting student learning.[210] Although mostly utilized in secular education settings, the FFT has the potential to evaluate curriculum using the established vision and essential components of a Christian education curriculum.

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[207] Estep and Estep, "Checking the Legend," 203.

[208] Estep and Estep, "Checking the Legend," 203.

[209] Estep and Estep, "Checking the Legend," 203; quoting Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church*, 95.

[210] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 1.

The FFT addresses the deficiencies in traditional evaluation systems, such as outdated criteria and checklists, simplistic comments like "satisfactory" without guidance for improvement, lack of evaluator consistency, and evaluation based on one-way communication that is "done to" teachers.[211] Danielson suggests two main reasons to utilize the FFT for evaluation: (1) ensuring equality that consists of a consistent definition of effective teaching, a shared understanding of such definition, and highly skilled and trained evaluators; (2) the benefits of promoting professional learning and development.[212]

FFT: A Research-Based Evaluation Tool

Danielson created the FFT from a compilation of Madeline Hunter's work and research in process-product and cognitive science.[213] The FFT is grounded in research, experience, and theory to ensure its validity and applicability to a large variety of instructional settings.[214] Danielson argues, "Without a framework, the structure is reduced to whatever the mentor, coach, or supervisor has in her head, and it thus reflects the personal beliefs that individual holds about teaching, regardless of whether these have ever been made explicit."[215] The same is true for evaluating curriculum. Without a framework to specifically evaluate components of a curriculum based on research in best practices and cognitive science, the curriculum's effectiveness is left to individuals with biases to decide. Danielson adds, "With a framework for teaching in hand, however,

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[211] Charlotte Danielson, "Evaluations That Help Teachers Learn," *Effective Teacher* 68, no. 4 (2011): 35.

[212] Danielson, "Evaluations That Help Teachers Learn," 35-37.

[213] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 6-7.

[214] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 19-20.

[215] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 12.

participants can conduct conversations about where to focus improvement efforts within the context of shared definitions and understandings."[216]

The FFT is built on the principles required for "deep and flexible understanding of complex content, to be able to formulate and test hypotheses, to analyze information, and to be able to relate on part of their learning to another."[217] The FFT is grounded in a constructivist approach to education, and the unifying theme running throughout every component of the FFT is student engagement in learning important concepts.[218] From a constructivist approach, teachers design curriculum with the recognition that students must do the intellectual work in order to understand a concept.[219] The FFT is built to evaluate teaching from this perspective. Danielson states, "It assumes the primary goal of education is for students to understand important concepts and to develop important cognitive skills, and that it is each teacher's responsibility, using the resources at hand, to accomplish those goals."[220]

FFT Components

The FFT is divided into twenty-two components that are clustered into four domains: (1) Planning and Preparation, (2) Classroom Environment, (3) Instruction, and (4) Professional Responsibilities.[221] In an effort to evaluate curriculum only, as opposed to classroom instruction influenced by various teacher styles and abilities, only Domains 1 and 3 are explored and utilized in this research endeavor. Danielson argues that it is plausible to envision how teachers will engage students in learning by observing their

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[216] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 12.

[217] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 15.

[218] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 26.

[219] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 16.

[220] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 17.

[221] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 1.

plans.[222] This research aims to do just that: observe and evaluate curriculum plans to assess the means and likelihood of student engagement. The table below lists each FFT domain and the five or six components within each domain.[223]

Table 1. FFT domains and components

Planning and Preparation	*Classroom Environment*	*Instruction*	*Professional Responsibilities*
Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy	Creating an environment of respect and rapport	Communicating with students	Reflecting on teaching
Demonstrating knowledge of students	Establishing a culture for learning	Using questioning and discussion techniques	Maintaining accurate records
Setting instructional outcomes	Managing classroom procedures	Engaging students in learning	Communicating with families
Demonstrating knowledge of resources	Managing student behavior	Using assessment in instruction	Participating in a professional community
Designing coherent instruction	Organizing physical space	Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness	Growing and developing professionally
Designing student assessments			Showing professionalism

FFT: Domains 1 and 3

Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation) focuses on how content is organized and instruction is designed in order to achieve student learning. The criterion for scoring Domain 1 recognizes that knowing the content is not adequate because "content must be transformed through instructional design into sequences of activities and exercises that make it accessible to students."[224] Danielson stresses the importance of Domain 1 by stating that one could "argue that a teacher's role is not so much to *teach* as it is to

[222] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 27.

[223] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 3-4.

[224] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 26-27.

arrange for learning."[225] This reveals not only the importance of Domain 1 but also the importance of curriculum in Christian education.

Domain 3 (Instruction) contains the essential components for engaging students in content and learning. It reflects the chief mission of education: to improve student learning.[226] Domain 3 components are united through a vision of students working collaboratively and forming understanding.[227] In order to score well (i.e., Accomplished or Exemplary) in Domain 3, students must be "engaged in meaningful work, which carries significance beyond the next test and which can provide skills and knowledge necessary for answering important questions or contributing to important projects. . . . The work is real and significant, and it is important to students as well as to teachers."[228] For Christlike transformation to happen, students must be engaged in important and meaningful learning.

Conclusion

To answer the research question ("According to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, what are common strengths and weaknesses among high school small group curricula and what could increase their effectiveness in promoting transferrable learning and spiritual growth?"), I have compiled the most up-to-date research on effective instructional practices. Due to a large gap in current scholarly research on the evaluation or effectiveness of high school small group curricula, I have provided strong rational for this study, the research literature supporting effective instruction, and the need for evaluation. I have also demonstrated that the Danielson Framework for Teaching evaluates the targeted components of a faith-based constructivist approach to effective

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[225] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 27 (emphasis added).

[226] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 29.

[227] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 29.

[228] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 29.

learning, facilitates the established vision for Christian education, and assesses curricula's ability to provide instruction that promotes deep thinking and effective discussions, thereby increasing the likelihood of student learning, the transference of content, and Christlike transformation.

Curriculum for Christian education often holds an unbalanced learning approach, leaning too much on recitation and memorization or too much on fun activities with little rigor or deep learning. As the established vision for Christian education reflects, students must encounter a curriculum that does not simply convey knowledge but leads to Christlike transformation. The FFT was utilized to help educators and curriculum designers evaluate the effectiveness of existing curricula in reaching this goal. Chapter 3 discusses the specific methods proposed for utilizing the FFT in this manner.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

While there is very little research or evaluative measures for determining the effectiveness of Sunday school and small group curricula for churches, it is an area worthy of attention. I reflect again on an essential question from chapter 1, "How do we know the curriculum we are handing teachers, often untrained and spiritually immature themselves, includes sufficient instructional practices and strategies for effectively educating our young people and growing them into Christlikeness?"

This chapter describes the methodological design and procedures utilized in this research study as I sought to answer this essential question by analyzing current curricula. The purpose of this quantitative study was to utilize the FFT to find strengths and weaknesses among high school small group curricula and determine what could increase their effectiveness in promoting transferrable learning and spiritual growth. The FFT not only served in the role of a summative assessment of existing curricula but also as a formative assessment offering suggestions for improvement to existing curricula and as a guide for the development of future curricula. The following research questions were considered in this study:

1. What are five of the best-selling curricula among evangelical churches for high school Sunday school classes or small groups?
2. How does each curriculum score according to Domains 1 and 3 on the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT)?
3. Is church curriculum presently written in a way that trained or untrained teachers can effectively follow to promote student thinking, application, and transfer of biblical knowledge and understanding into Christlike living?
4. Based on strengths and weaknesses of curricula according to Domains 1 and 3 on the FFT, what are suggestions and further implications for improving church curricula designed for high school students?

5. What are suggested practices in church contexts using the FFT for evaluation?

Research Design Overview

The main component of this research involves the use of the FFT in analyzing and evaluating church curricula for small groups. Therefore, these steps were followed:

1. Identify and download samples or purchase five of the best-selling high school small group curricula among evangelical churches.
2. Number each lesson from all five published curricula, and randomly draw ten numbers representing the three lessons to be evaluated from each curriculum.
3. Score each lesson from 1 to 4 according to all components of Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT.
4. Record and analyze the data from each component of each domain.
5. Find the average score from the ten combined lessons from each curriculum for each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3.
6. Create an overall score for each curriculum, including a summary of strengths and weaknesses.
7. Create an overall average score for each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3, including a summary of strengths and weaknesses of published curricula according to the domains and characteristics described in the FFT.
8. Write a research report that includes suggestions for improvement for each curriculum individually and for a generalization of all church curricula for high school students. Also discuss standard practices for teacher evaluation within churches.

Population

The research population for this study was all evangelical curriculum publishers of small group or Sunday school materials for high school students sold by Christian Book Distributors.

Sample and Delimitations

Samples were chosen from a list of all evangelical published small group or Sunday school curriculum for high school students provided by Christian Book Distributors. This sampling technique purposively targeted five of the best-selling curricula among this population in order to get a representation of high school curricula

that is most widely used among evangelical churches. While there is no list of best-selling curricula, Christian Book Distributors sells curricula from a wide variety of publishing companies. After obtaining a list of their five best-selling publishing companies, I attempted to find five of the best-selling products by calling the publishing companies on this list and finding their top-selling curricula for teen small group studies. The best-selling curricula from each of these five publishing companies were then evaluated.

After gathering the five curricula to evaluate, I carried out a random sampling of lessons to be evaluated for each curriculum. None of the curricula had ten lessons available as samples, so I purchased the latest quarterly issue of each and randomly selected ten lessons from each quarterly to evaluate using the FFT. However, in efforts to protect each publishing company, I did not label the findings according to publisher but as Curriculum 1 through Curriculum 5.

Limitations of Generalization

This study sought to evaluate only five curricula out of the many evangelical curricula in production. While I strived to find the five best-selling curricula for evaluation, those five are not fully representative of all published curricula for evangelical small groups and Sunday school classes for high school students. Curricula may be written in many different forms based on many different educational philosophies and methodologies. Since there is a large gap in the research of curriculum evaluation for instructional effectiveness, this study sought to provide a foundational representation of curriculum effectiveness as a whole while prompting further investigation and research.

Research Method and Instrumentation

This study relied on a content analysis utilizing Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT evaluation tool. The FFT is a constructivist framework built on research-based methodologies. In order for administrators to use the FFT for teacher evaluations in the

state of Kentucky, evaluators must complete an initial training and pass the final assessment. In order to maintain eligibility for observing and evaluating teachers, evaluators must also be recertified yearly by completing coursework and passing an exam. I have successfully passed this certification requirement each year since 2012 either through face-to-face instruction or Teachscape, an online FFT training and evaluation platform.

The FFT is both valid and reliable as it was compiled based on a multitude of research on effective instructional techniques and philosophies, much of which were discussed in chapter 2. According to Charlotte Danielson, "The framework for teaching is based on the Praxis III criteria developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) after extensive surveys of the research literature, consultation with expert practitioners and researchers, wide-ranging job analyses, summaries of the demands of state licensing programs, and fieldwork."[1]

Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation) relies on the work of many leading researchers and educators. Research overwhelmingly points to the reliance of effective instruction and optimal student learning on well-organized, effective planning.[2] Component 1A is built upon research that teachers should understand the content they are teaching and how it relates to other ideas and content.[3] Component 1B relies on research on the importance of teachers' knowing students, their abilities, prior knowledge, and skills.[4] Component 1C stresses the importance of teachers' establishing clear goals and outcomes for student learning; many studies in the research literature support the link

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[1] Charlotte Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2007), 183.

[2] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 184.

[3] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 184-85.

[4] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 185.

between effective student learning and teachers' learning goals.[5] Component 1D is concerned with lesson designers' demonstration of their knowledge of resources, which relies on research addressing the need for multiple resources and collaboration.[6] Component 1E is concerned with designing coherent instruction. This component is highly supported by research literature recommending that concepts should be the center around which content is organized in an effort to assist the brain in making patterns and connections.[7] Component 1F (Designing student assessments) is built upon a multitude of research studies, including the work of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe.[8] They argue that a major shift in education requires teachers to utilize assessment and student feedback as teaching happens, not only as an audit of student work at the end of a unit, in order to improve student understanding and uncover any misunderstandings.[9]

Domain 3 (Instruction) is heavily reliant upon recent educational research emphasizing the importance of constructivist teaching and learning focused on teaching for conceptual learning and understanding.[10] Component 3A (Communicating with students) is specifically supported by Susan Ambrose et al. in *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. The authors conclude from their research that material must be connected to student interest in order get more student motivation

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[5] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 185.

[6] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 186.

[7] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 186.

[8] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 186.

[9] Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2005), 247.

[10] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 187.

and engagement.[11] Similarly, content must be related to and integrated with background knowledge and must be presented with clarity.[12]

Component 3b (questioning and discussion techniques) is grounded in effective questioning research and specifically connected to Lois LeBar's work in the field of Christian education. LeBar states,

> When students are trained to ask questions of the text, they see exciting things that they had no idea were there when they read superficially. Good teachers seek to become skilled in the art of asking good questions. Not only do we need to see how the Bible relates to students' needs, but we need to help them think up good questions to discover the truths for themselves.[13]

Component 3C (Engaging students in learning) is also the product of a multitude of research. In particular, Peter Brown, Henry Roediger, and Mark Daniel refer to the science of learning as they explain that for new learning to stick in long-term memory, a process of consolidation is necessary. They state, "Durable learning, however, requires time for mental rehearsal and other processes for consolidation."[14]

Component 3D (Using assessment in instruction) relies on research indicating not only that assessment should be utilized for effective instruction but also that "instructional support does not need to come directly from another person to be helpful."[15] This is reflected in the self-assessment criteria found in the Exemplary range of 3D. Teachers are not the only responsible persons in the assessment process. Students can learn to self-assess and reflect on their own learning for effective learning. Research

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[11] Susan A. Ambrose et al., *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 83.

[12] Mary Alice Gunter, Thomas E. Estes, and Susan L. Mintz, *Instruction: A Models Approach*, 5th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2007), 11.

[13] Lois E. LeBar, "Planning for Teaching," in *Introduction to Biblical Christian Education*, ed. Werner C. Graendorf (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 172.

[14] Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, and Mark A. Daniel, *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2014), 49.

[15] Ambrose et al., *How Learning Works*, 132.

points to the importance of metacognition (i.e., students' ability to think about their thinking) for transferable learning to occur.[16]

Lastly, component 3e (demonstrating responsiveness and flexibility) is based on research by The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards that recognizes the value of lesson adjustments, responsiveness to students, and teacher persistence.[17]

The research literature supporting each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT is also in alignment with the literature review in chapter 2. The FFT aligns with the most current research on creating a culture of thinking and discussion, effective questioning and discussion techniques, and deeper learning. It also aligns with the research literature supporting evaluation and effective components of curriculum.

Ethics Committee Process

Since this study relied on content evaluation of published curricula, the research process did not require interaction with people. However, I obtained approval by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee before proceeding with the research. All content was found online or purchased through the curriculum producer's website.

Research Procedures

The literature review revealed a large gap in the research concerned with evaluating church curricula, especially small group and Sunday school curricula. The majority of research on curriculum evaluation focused on guidance for churches in selecting curriculum from the available options based on specific church vision and needs. However, there was no research on evaluating curriculum for instructional

[16] Gunter, Estes, and Mintz, *Instruction*, 11.

[17] Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice*, 188.

effectiveness. Therefore, this research solely focused on evaluating curriculum for potential effectiveness.

After choosing five of the best-selling evangelical curricula for small groups and Sunday schools for high school students, I randomly selected ten lessons from each curriculum. I evaluated and analyzed ten lessons from all five curricula using each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT. The following table was used to evaluate each of the five curricula.

Table 2. Evaluation of each curriculum component

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average Score
Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy											
Demonstrating knowledge of students											
Setting instructional outcomes											
Demonstrating knowledge of resources											
Designing coherent instruction											
Designing student assessments											
Domain 3: Instruction	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average Score
Communicating with students											
Using questioning and discussion techniques											

Table 2 continued

Domain 3: Instruction	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average Score
Engaging students in learning											
Using assessment in instruction											
Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness											

Next, the following table was utilized to record the overall scores for each curriculum. It included the overall score from each domain, the total score, the average rating (between 1 and 4), and the overall range (Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, or Exemplary) for each curriculum.

Table 3. Evaluation of overall curricula scores

Curriculum	Domain 1 Score	Domain 3 Score	Total Score	Average Rating	Range (Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, Exemplary)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

I utilized the following table to record a score for each component in Domains 1 and 3 for all five curricula in order to find an average score and range for each individual component.

Table 4. Evaluation chart for overall component scores

	Curriculum 1 Average Score	Curriculum 2 Average Score	Curriculum 3 Average Score	Curriculum 4 Average Score	Curriculum 5 Average Score	Average Score	Range (Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, Exemplary)
Domain 1: Planning and Preparation							
Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy							
Demonstrating knowledge of students							
Setting instructional outcomes							
Demonstrating knowledge of resources							
Designing coherent instruction							
Designing student assessments							
Domain 3: Instruction							
Communicating with students							
Using questioning and discussion techniques							
Engaging students in learning							
Using assessment in instruction							
Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness							

Scoring Criteria

The qualitative research involved in this study relied on the utilization of the FFT for content analysis of ten lessons from each of the five published curricula. Each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT were scored from 1 to 4 (1 = Ineffective; 2 = Developing; 3 = Accomplished; 4 = Exemplary). A score was calculated for each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3. Next, a combined total score was given for each curriculum. By dividing the total score by the number of components in each particular domain and then dividing that number by two because there are two domains scored, an average score would reflect an overall score in the Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, or Exemplary range.

Next, after scores were collected for each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3 for each curriculum, an overall average was calculated for each component based on the scores from all five curricula. This provided an overall picture of the ability of curricula to provide effective material in each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3. After an average score was calculated, it was then translated to an overall Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, or Exemplary rating for each component among all curricula analyzed.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research methodology utilized in answering the research question. The research design, instrumentation, and procedures were thoroughly explained. Samples, delimitations, and generalizations were also explained. The following chapter describes research results following the methodology explained in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this research study was to utilize the FFT to find strengths and weaknesses among high school small group curricula and determine instructional practices that could increase the curricula effectiveness in promoting transferable learning and spiritual growth. To complete this study and answer the research questions, I utilized Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT to evaluate ten randomly sampled lessons from five of the best-selling curricula for small groups of high school students. This study presents the evaluation results for each lesson, for each curriculum, and for each component of Doman 1 and Domain 3. The resulting data is reported and analyzed in this chapter.

Compilation Protocol

Before completing this study, I received several years of FFT training through Teachscape, an online learning platform designed to prepare administrators and learning coaches to evaluate and grow teachers professionally by utilizing the FFT. After the initial training, evaluators must be recertified yearly to be qualified to use the FFT to evaluate teachers. I have completed this training once a year for the past seven years.

Phase 1

After having difficulty finding a list of or method of identifying the five best-selling high school curricula for small groups with certainty, I contacted Christian Book Distributors, which distributes most all curricula from a variety of evangelical publishers. They directed me to the filter and sort features on their website. I found the top-selling publishers of teen small group curricula from Christian Book Distributors' website by limiting my search to high school curricula for small groups and using their best-selling

sort feature. There were two publishing companies that had more than one curriculum in the top five best-sellers, so I counted that company only once and used the top seven in the best-selling list to find the top five best-selling publishing companies.

Next, I contacted the publishing company represented in this list of five best-sellers to find their best-selling curricula for high school small groups, and then I purchased the latest teacher and student books from each company. For each curriculum purchased, I used an online number generator to limit the number of lessons in each curriculum to evaluate only ten. I entered the total number of lessons provided into the number generator and recorded the first ten numbers that it generated. If a number was duplicated, I did not count the duplicate and continued until I had ten different numbers. For example, Curriculum 1 had thirteen lessons in the teacher and corresponding student books. After putting numbers one through thirteen in a random draw generator (random.org), individual numbers were generated until there were a total of ten. If a number was generated for the second time, it was skipped, and numbers were generated again.

For Curriculum 1, the following numbers were generated: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13. Therefore, these lessons were selected to be evaluated in Curriculum 1. For Curriculum 2, the following numbers were generated: 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. Therefore, these lessons were selected to be evaluated in Curriculum 2. For Curriculum 3, the following numbers were generated: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12. Therefore, these lessons were selected to be evaluated in Curriculum 3. For Curriculum 4, the following numbers were generated: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13. Therefore, these lessons were selected to be evaluated in Curriculum 4. For Curriculum 5, the following numbers were generated: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. Therefore, these lessons were selected to be evaluated in Curriculum 5.

Phase 2

After the lesson numbers for each curriculum were generated and lessons were selected to evaluate, Domains 1 and 3 of the FFT were used to evaluate each lesson of each curriculum. The teacher edition and student edition of each curriculum were reviewed in order to evaluate each component of both domains. The scores for each curriculum were recorded per randomly selected lesson in the tables below. The following scores are recorded for the corresponding label (1 = Ineffective; 2 = Developing; 3 = Accomplished; 4 = Exemplary). Domain 3 component E (3E; Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness) relies heavily on the evaluation of a teacher's ability to be flexible and respond effectively in moving students toward deeper understanding. While it is more difficult to assess this component due to evaluating the curricula instead of teacher performance, this component was scored based on the written advice or guidelines for teacher flexibility and responsiveness. If a score of 1 (Ineffective) is received, it might be possible for a teacher to make adaptations, but they are not explicitly written into the curricula.

Table 5. Curriculum 1 scores

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	8	9	11	12	13	Average Score
Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
Demonstrating knowledge of students	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1.5
Setting instructional outcomes	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Demonstrating knowledge of resources	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1.6

Table 5 continued

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	8	9	11	12	13	Average Score
Designing coherent instruction	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Designing student assessments	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Domain 3: Instruction	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	8	9	11	12	13	Average Score
Communicating with students	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	2.6
Using questioning and discussion techniques	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1.2
Engaging students in learning	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	1.7
Using assessment in instruction	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0

Table 6. Curriculum 2 scores

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average Score
Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0
Demonstrating knowledge of students	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
Setting instructional outcomes	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2.7
Demonstrating knowledge of resources	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.9

Table 6 continued

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average Score
Designing coherent instruction	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1.9
Designing student assessments	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1.9
Domain 3: Instruction	Lesson 11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average Score
Communicating with students	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.9
Using questioning and discussion techniques	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1.4
Engaging students in learning	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
Using assessment in instruction	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0

Table 7. Curriculum 3 scores

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 1	2	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	Average Score
Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2.0
Demonstrating knowledge of students	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
Setting instructional outcomes	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Demonstrating knowledge of resources	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.1

Table 7 continued

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 1	2	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	Average Score
Designing coherent instruction	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1.8
Designing student assessments	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Domain 3: Instruction	Lesson 1	2	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	Average Score
Communicating with students	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2.1
Using questioning and discussion techniques	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1.3
Engaging students in learning	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2.1
Using assessment in instruction	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1.2
Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0

Table 8. Curriculum 4 scores

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	8	9	11	12	13	Average Score
Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Demonstrating knowledge of students	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Setting instructional outcomes	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Demonstrating knowledge of resources	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 8 continued

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	8	9	11	12	13	Average Score
Designing coherent instruction	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Designing student assessments	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Domain 3: Instruction	Lesson 1	2	3	4	5	8	9	11	12	13	Average Score
Communicating with students	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Using questioning and discussion techniques	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Engaging students in learning	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Using assessment in instruction	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 9. Curriculum 5 scores

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 2	3	4	5	6	8	9	10	11	12	Average Score
Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0
Demonstrating knowledge of students	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2.2
Setting instructional outcomes	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Demonstrating knowledge of resources	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0

Table 9 continued

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation	Lesson 2	3	4	5	6	8	9	10	11	12	Average Score
Designing coherent instruction	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	2.8
Designing student assessments	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Domain 3: Instruction	Lesson 2	3	4	5	6	8	9	10	11	12	Average Score
Communicating with students	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0
Using questioning and discussion techniques	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
Engaging students in learning	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	2.6
Using assessment in instruction	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1.4
Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0

Phase 3

Using the existing data, I calculated an overall score for Domain 1 and Domain 3 for each curriculum. Next, I used this information to find and an overall score for each of the five curricula based on Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. Since the highest possible score for each component is 4.0, the average rating for each curriculum is reported out of a total possible score of 4.0. To find the range, Ineffective must start at 1.0, since 1.0 is the lowest possible score, and end at 1.49, since 1.50 and above would be closer to a score of 2.0, which is Developing. Therefore, Developing begins at 1.50 and ends at 2.49, Accomplished includes 2.50-3.49, and Exemplary includes 3.5-4.0.

Table 10. Overall curricula scores

Curriculum	Domain 1 Score	Domain 3 Score	Total Score	Average Rating	Range (Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, Exemplary)
1	12.00/24.00	7.50/20.00	19.50/44.00	1.77	Developing
2	14.40/24.00	9.30/22.00	23.70/44.00	2.15	Developing
3	9.90/24.00	7.70/20.00	17.60/44/00	1.60	Developing
4	6.00/24.00	5.00/20.00	11.00/44.00	1.00	Ineffective
5	12.00/24.00	10.00/20.00	22.00/44.00	2.00	Developing

Curriculum 1 had a score of 14.40 out of 24.00 in Domain 1, 7.50 out of 20.00 in Domain 3, and an overall score of 19.50 out of 44.00 in Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. This resulted in an average rating of 1.77 out of 4.00 and fell within the Developing range.

Curriculum 2 had a score of 14.40 out of 24.00 in Domain 1, 9.30 out of 20.00 in Domain 3, and an overall score of 23.70 out of 44.00 in Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. This resulted in an average rating of 2.15 out of 4.00 and fell within the Developing range.

Curriculum 3 had a score of 9.90 out of 24.00 in Domain 1, 7.70 out of 20.00 in Domain 3, and an overall score of 17.60 out of 44.00 in Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. This resulted in an average rating of 1.60 out of 4.00 and fell within the Developing range.

Curriculum 4 had a score of 6.00 out of 24.00 in Domain 1, 5.00 out of 20.00 in Domain 3, and an overall score of 11.00 out of 44.00 in Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. This resulted in an average rating of 1.00 out of 4.00 and fell within the Ineffective range.

Curriculum 5 had a score of 12.00 out of 24.00 in Domain 1, 10.00 out of 20.00 in Domain 3, and an overall score of 22.00 out of 44.00 in Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. This resulted in an average rating of 2.00 out of 4.00 and fell within the Developing range.

Phase 4

Lastly, I calculated an overall score for each individual component of Domain 1 and Domain 3 by combining and averaging the results of all five curricula in order to gain a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses according to the components within Domain 1 and Domain 3. The average score was based on 1.00 being the lowest and 4.00 being the highest possible score. To find the range, Ineffective must start at 1.00, since 1.00 is the lowest possible score, and end at 1.49, since 1.50 and above would be closer to a score of 2.00, which is Developing. Therefore, Developing begins at 1.50 and ends at 2.49, Accomplished includes 2.50-3.49, and Exemplary includes 3.5-4.0.

Table 11. Overall component scores

	Curriculum 1 Average Score	Curriculum 2 Average Score	Curriculum 3 Average Score	Curriculum 4 Average Score	Curriculum 5 Average Score	Average Score	Range (Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, Exemplary)
Domain 1: Planning and Preparation							
Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy	2.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	3.0	2.20	Developing
Demonstrating knowledge of students	1.5	2.0	2.0	1.0	2.2	1.74	Developing
Setting instructional outcomes	1.0	2.7	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.34	Ineffective
Demonstrating knowledge of resources	1.6	2.9	2.1	1.0	2.0	1.92	Developing
Designing coherent instruction	1.0	1.9	1.8	1.0	2.8	1.70	Developing
Designing student assessments	1.0	1.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.18	Ineffective

Table 11 continued

	Curriculum 1 Average Score	Curriculum 2 Average Score	Curriculum 3 Average Score	Curriculum 4 Average Score	Curriculum 5 Average Score	Average Score	Range (Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, Exemplary)
Domain 3: Instruction							
Communicating with students	2.6	2.9	2.1	1.0	3.0	2.32	Developing
Using questioning and discussion techniques	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.0	2.0	1.38	Ineffective
Engaging students in learning	1.7	2.0	2.1	1.0	2.6	1.88	Developing
Using assessment in instruction	1.0	2.0	1.2	1.0	1.4	1.32	Ineffective
Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.00	Ineffective

In Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation), component A (1A; Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy) received an average score of 2.20 out of 4.00, falling within the Developing range. Component B (1B; Demonstrating knowledge of students) received an average score of 1.74 out of 4.00, falling within the Developing range. Component C (1C; Setting instructional outcomes) received an average of 1.34 out of 4.00, falling within the Ineffective range. Component D (1D; Demonstrating knowledge of resources) combined for an average of 1.92 out of 4.00, falling within the Developing range. Component E (1E; Designing coherent instruction) received an average score of 1.70 out of 4.00, falling within the Developing range. Component F (1F; Designing student assessments) received an average of 1.18 out of 4.00, falling within the Ineffective range.

In Domain 3 (Instruction), component A (3A; Communicating with students) received an average score of 2.32 out of 4.00, falling within the Developing range.

Component B (3B; Using questioning and discussion techniques) received an average score of 1.38 out of 4.00, falling within the Ineffective range. Component C (3C; Engaging students in learning) received an average of 1.88 out of 4.00, falling within the Developing range. Component D (3D; Using assessment in instruction) received an average of 1.32 out of 4.00, falling within the Ineffective range. Component E (3E; Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness) received an average score of 1.00 out of 4.00, falling within the Ineffective range.

Results by Research Question

The overarching research question sought to utilize the FFT in order to evaluate the current best-selling curricula for high school small groups in order to better understand curricula effectiveness, including strengths and weaknesses. In order to thoroughly understand and answer this question, five research questions were established and explored. The first question helped to identify the five best-selling curricula for high school small groups. The second question sought to discover how each curriculum scored according to Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT. The third question explored the effectiveness of curricula if provided to untrained teachers who could not easily make adaptations and additions. The fourth question helped to offer suggestions for improvements to curricula based on the evaluation results and common areas of weakness. The fifth question explored the potential of using the FFT in church contexts.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked, “What are five of the best-selling curricula among evangelical churches for high school Sunday school classes or small groups?” This information was not easily accessible. I eventually decided to use Christian Book Distributors to help identify the best-selling curricula. Christian Book Distributors sells most all evangelical curriculum from their website. They advised me to use the filter function on their website to limit search results to only high school curricula for small

groups. After I obtained the results, they suggested using the sort feature that sorted the results by listing the best-selling resources in order from greatest to least. An unanticipated result was finding that two publishing companies had more than one curriculum in the five best-sellers. After obtaining supervisor consent, I used the top five publishing companies instead of the top five curricula. Since most curriculum publishing companies produce similar products, I decided to evaluate five different publishers. I contacted the five best-selling publishing companies and asked for their best-selling curriculum for high school small groups. Lastly, I purchased the latest issues of each of the five curricula, including the student workbooks.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked, "How does each curriculum score according to Domains 1 and 3 on the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT)?" Overall, four curricula scored within the Developing range, one scored within the Ineffective range, and no curricula scored within the Accomplished or Exemplary ranges according to a combined average score for Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT.

Curriculum 1 had a score of 14.40 out of 24.00 in Domain 1, 7.50 out of 20.00 in Domain 3, and an overall score of 19.50 out of 44.00 in Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. This resulted in an average rating of 1.77 out of 4.00 and fell within the Developing range. In Domain 1, Curriculum 1 averaged a score of 1.62, which narrowly fell within the Developing range. The highest scoring component in Domain 1 was component A (1A; Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy), and the lowest scoring components were component C (1C; Setting instructional outcomes), component E (1E; Designing coherent instruction), and component F (1F; Designing student assessments), all of which scored a 1.00 out of 4.00. In Domain 3, Curriculum 1 averaged a score of 1.50, which narrowly fell within the Developing range. The highest scoring component in Domain 3 was component A (3A; Communicating with students), and the

lowest scoring components were for component D (3D; Using assessment in instruction) and component E (3E; Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness).

Curriculum 2 had a score of 14.40 out of 24.00 in Domain 1, 9.30 out of 20.00 in Domain 3, and an overall score of 23.70 out of 44.00 in Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. This resulted in an average rating of 2.15 out of 4 and fell within the Developing range. In Domain 1, Curriculum 2 averaged a score of 2.40, which fell at the high end of the Developing range. The highest scoring component in Domain 1 was component A (1A; Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy), and the lowest scoring components were component E (1E; Designing coherent instruction) and component F (1F; Designing student assessments), both of which scored a 1.00 out of 4.00. In Domain 3, Curriculum 2 averaged a score of 1.90, which fell within the Developing range. The highest scoring component in Domain 3 was component A (3A; Communicating with students), and the lowest scoring component was (3E; Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness).

Curriculum 3 had a score of 9.90 out of 24.00 in Domain 1, 7.70 out of 20.00 in Domain 3, and an overall score of 17.60 out of 44.00 in Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. This resulted in average rating of 1.60 out of 4 and fell within the Developing range. In Domain 1, Curriculum 3 averaged a score of 1.70, which fell within the Developing range. The highest scoring component in Domain 1 was component D (1D; Demonstrating knowledge of resources), and the lowest scoring components were component C (1C; Setting instructional outcomes) and component F (1F; Designing student assessments), both of which scored a 1.00 out of 4.00. In Domain 3, Curriculum 3 averaged a score of 1.50, which narrowly fell within the Developing range. The highest scoring components in Domain 3 were component A (3A; Communicating with students) and component C (3C; Engaging students in learning), and the lowest scoring component was component E (3E; Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness).

Curriculum 4 had a score of 6.00 out of 24.00 in Domain 1, 5.00 out of 20.00 in Domain 3, and an overall score of 11.00 out of 44.00 in Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. This resulted in average rating of 1.00 out of 4.00 and fell within the Ineffective range. In Domain 1, Curriculum 4 averaged a score of 1.00, which fell at the lowest point of the Ineffective range. All six components of Domain 1 (components A-F) scored an average of 1.00 (Ineffective). In Domain 3, Curriculum 4 averaged a score of 1.00, which also fell at the lowest point of the Ineffective range. All five components of Domain 3 (components A-E) scored an average of 1.00 (Ineffective).

Curriculum 5 had a score of 12.00 out of 24.00 in Domain 1, 10.00 out of 20.00 in Domain 3, and an overall score of 22.00 out of 44.00 in Domain 1 and Domain 3 combined. This resulted in average rating of 2.00 out of 4.00 and fell within the Developing range. In Domain 1, Curriculum 5 averaged a score of 2.00, which fell within the Developing range. The highest scoring component in Domain 1 was component A (1A; Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy), and the lowest scoring components were component C (1C; Setting instructional outcomes) and component F (1F; Designing student assessments), both of which scored a 1.00 out of 4.00. In Domain 3, Curriculum 5 averaged a score of 2.00, which fell within the Developing range. The highest scoring component in Domain 3 was component A (3A; Communicating with students), and the lowest scoring component was component E (3E; Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness).

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked, “Is church curriculum presently written in a way that trained or untrained teachers can effectively follow to promote student thinking, application, and transfer of biblical knowledge and understanding into Christlike living?” The FFT is designed in a way that Accomplished and Exemplary scores, or scores of 3.00 and 4.00, respectively, on each component, are considered effective at promoting student

thinking, application, and transfer of learning and understanding. The highest overall score or range for any curriculum as a whole was 2.15 (Developing). The highest score for Domain 1 among all five curricula was 2.40 (Developing), and the highest score for Domain 3 was 2.00 (Developing). After reviewing all scores from Domain 1, Domain 3, and a combination of Domain 1 and Domain 3, I found that there were no scores of 2.50-4.00, meaning there were no scores within the Accomplished or Exemplary ranges. According to this data, none of the five curricula evaluated was written in a way that teachers can effectively follow to promote student thinking, application, and transfer of biblical knowledge and understanding leading to Christlike living. Trained educators may have the knowledge and ability to apply their understanding of effective instructional practices in a manner that could potentially increase the scores on many components in Domain 1 and Domain 3. However, if curricula are followed explicitly and conducted instructionally exactly as prescribed, none of the evaluated curricula would promote high levels of student thinking, application, and transfer of learning that is indicative of effective instruction according to the FFT. It is highly probable that if any of these five curricula was provided to uneducated volunteer teachers for high school small groups without training or adjustments, then effective instruction—according to the FFT—would not occur.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 asked, "Based on strengths and weaknesses of curricula according to Domains 1 and 3 on the FFT, what are suggestions and further implications for improving church curricula designed for high school students?" There were five components from Domain 1 and Domain 3 that had an average score in the Ineffective range. Each of the five Ineffective components will be discussed.

Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

Component 3E (Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness) had an average score of 1.00 among all five curricula. In fact, each of the five curricula had a score of 1.00, indicating that each curriculum scored Ineffective. The Ineffective criteria for this component on the FFT are as follows: (1) The teacher adheres to the instruction plan in spite of evidence of poor student understanding or lack of interest. (2) The teacher ignores student questions; when students experience difficulty, the teacher blames the students or their home environment. The critical attributes under Ineffective are as follows: (1) The teacher ignores indications of student boredom or lack of understanding. (2) The teacher brushes aside student questions. (3) The teacher makes no attempt to incorporate students' interests into the lesson. (4) The teacher conveys to students that when they have difficulty learning, it is their fault. (5) In reflecting on practice, the teacher does not indicate that it is important to reach all students. A score of 1.00 for each curriculum suggests that these Ineffective indicators and critical attributes best fit all five curricula.

This component (3E) is definitely more evident and valid to score in a classroom as opposed to evaluating only the curricula; however, it was included in the evaluation process because curricula can suggest, recommend, or encourage certain behaviors or responses that could assist teachers in meeting this criteria. For the curricula evaluated, there were no suggestions or encouragement that would aid teachers in the area of Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness, thus resulting in the score of 1.00.

For a curricula to score at the highest level (Exemplary) in Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness (3E), the curricula would need to promote the following: (1) The teacher seizes an opportunity to enhance learning, building on a spontaneous event or student interest, or successfully adjusts and differentiates instruction to address individual misunderstandings. (2) The teacher persists in seeking effective approaches for students who need help, using an extensive repertoire of instructional strategies and

soliciting additional resources from the school or community. The critical attributes under Exemplary are as follows: (1) The teacher's adjustments to the lesson are designed to assist individual students. (2) The teacher seizes on a teachable moment to enhance the lesson. (3) The teacher conveys to students that she will not consider a lesson "finished" until every student understands and that she has a broad range of approaches to use. (4) In reflecting on practice, the teacher can cite others in the school and beyond whom she has contacted for assistance in reaching some students.

Although it is difficult to address this component of the FFT through written curricula, since Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness (3E) is heavily based on a teacher's response and skill, it would be possible and helpful to list certain suggestions to aid teachers in flexibility and responsiveness during each lesson. In order to move curricula from an Ineffective range more toward an Exemplary range, the curricula should include at least three things.

First, the curricula could state that it is important that teachers look for opportunities to enhance learning by building on ideas or inquiries presented by students as well as adjusting instruction if misconceptions are identified. It would be helpful to list common misunderstandings or misconceptions to be watchful of. Second, curricula could specify that if student answers suggest misconceptions, then teachers should address these issues as they arise. A list of resources or instructional strategies for utilization could be provided. Third, the curricula should indicate to teachers that lessons are not complete just because students have finished the reading, answered the questions, or completed certain tasks. Instead, a lesson is considered complete when all students understand the instructional goals without lingering misconceptions or misunderstandings. This may conclude by the end of a teaching session, but supplemental instruction to address these misconceptions may need to be offered as a follow-up lesson. Suggestions for this type of follow-up lesson could be provided based on potential

misconceptions or misunderstandings. This would include additional resources beneficial for instructional assistance or building conceptual understanding.

Designing Student Assessments

Component 1F (Designing student assessments) had an average score of 1.18 among all five curricula, falling within the Ineffective range. Average scores for this component for each of the five curricula were 1.00, 1.90, 1.00, 1.00, and 1.00, indicating that four curricula scored an average of Ineffective and one scored an average of Developing. The Ineffective criteria for this component on the FFT are as follows: (1) Assessment procedures are not congruent with instructional outcomes; the proposed approach contains no criteria or standards. (2) The teacher has no plan to incorporate formative assessment into the lesson or unit nor any plan to use assessment results in designing future instruction. The critical attributes under Ineffective are as follows: (1) Assessments do not match instructional outcomes. (2) Assessments have no criteria. (3) No formative assessments have been designed. (4) Assessment results do not affect future plans. The five curricula evaluated were best represented by these indicators and critical attributes in Designing student assessments (1F).

For a curriculum to score at the highest level (Exemplary) in Designing student assessments (1F), it would need to promote the following: (1) The teacher's plan for student assessment is fully aligned with the instructional outcomes and has clear criteria and standards that show evidence of student contribution to their development. (2) Assessment methodologies have been adapted for individual students, as needed. (3) The approach to using formative assessment is well designed and includes student as well as teacher use of the assessment information. (4) The teacher intends to use assessment results to plan future instruction for individual students. The critical attributes under Exemplary are as follows: (1) Assessments provide opportunities for student choice. (2) Students participate in designing assessments for their own work. (3) Teacher-designed

assessments are authentic with real-world application, as appropriate. (4) Students develop rubrics according to teacher-specified learning objectives. (5) Students are actively involved in collecting information from formative assessments and provide input.

It is worth considering the following: Since churches do not assess in the form of tests and grades and curricula for churches typically do not provide this type of assessment, should components addressing assessment be included in this research and evaluation critique? Understanding the shift in assessment from a focus simply on the end result to a focus on assessment as *for* learning, not just assessment *of* learning, causes one to view this differently. After closely examining the criteria and critical attributes in Domain 1E and Domain 3D, it is evident that they are reflective of this shift in the purpose and meaning of assessment in learning. Therefore, it is still a valid and accurate evaluation of church curricula, as assessment has more instructional value and less emphasis on simply a test or grade.

There are at least three suggestions based on FFT criteria and critical attributes for Designing student assessments that would help move curricula from the Ineffective range toward the Exemplary range. First, assessment must match the instructional outcomes. If there are not clear instructional outcomes established, this will not be possible. The Exemplary range criteria suggests that students play a role in developing assessments. At first thought, this seems almost impossible for packaged curricula; however, with some modifications, it can be accomplished. If the outcomes for the lesson are posed as an essential question for the students at the very beginning of the lesson, then they can ask questions about that question.

For example, if the essential question for a lesson is “Is an eye for an eye acceptable for us?” and the targeted outcome is to teach students how to understand the Old Testament compared to how to understand the New Testament, then students would ask questions about this essential question. They may ask questions like “What does the

Bible say?" "Does the Bible say an eye for an eye, and does this mean it's okay for us?" "Why does the New Testament say to turn the other cheek?" and other possible questions. The curricula may suggest possible student questions, acknowledging that students may come up with questions not listed that should also be added. Using these questions, students can help create a rubric for evaluating their final responses to this question at the end of the unit or lesson. Basically, students are playing a role in deciding how a teacher would know if they thoroughly understand this concept or not. The role of the curriculum would be to state some common assessment criteria for student answers to this essential question while also allowing for additional components that arise from student comments. Although this assessment in not for purposes of grades or pass/fail, it is essential for teachers to obtain information that reflects the students' level of understanding, including any misconceptions that may remain. The Exemplary criteria also suggest giving students some choice in the final assessment. This could be as simple as providing an answer in written form, through illustration, through video, or other modes of communication.

Second, the curricula should include possible adaptations for students with special needs and accommodations. Curriculum should also offer recommendations on how teachers and students should be using the ongoing informal observation and formative assessment information to make adjustments to instruction.

Third, it is recommended, according to the Exemplary criteria, that assessments should relate to real-world application of the important concepts when appropriate. Assessments should require the student to utilize their understanding at that point in their lesson as it applies or connects to real-world situations.

Using Assessments in Instruction

Component 3D (Using assessments in instruction) had an average score of 1.32 among all five curricula, falling within the Ineffective range. Average scores for this

component for each of the five curricula were 1.00, 2.00, 1.20, 1.00, and 1.40, indicating that four curricula scored an average of Ineffective and one scored an average of Developing. The Ineffective criteria for this component on the FFT are as follows: (1) There is little or no assessment or monitoring of student learning; feedback is absent or of poor quality. (2) Students do not appear to be aware of the assessment criteria and do not engage in self-assessment. The critical attributes under Ineffective are as follows: (1) The teacher gives no indication of what high-quality work looks like. (2) The teacher makes no effort to determine whether students understand the lesson. (3) Feedback is only global. (4) The teacher does not ask students to evaluate their own classmates' work. The five curricula evaluated were best represented by these indicators and critical attributes in Using assessments in instruction (3D).

For a curricula to score at the highest level (Exemplary) in Using assessments in instruction (3D), the curricula would need to promote the following: (1) Assessment is fully integrated into instruction through extensive use of formative assessment. (2) Students appear to be aware of the assessment criteria, and there is some evidence that they have contributed to them. (3) Students self-assess and monitor their progress. (4) A variety of feedback—from students' teacher and peers—is accurate, is specific, and advances learning. (5) Questions, prompts, and assessments are used regularly to diagnose evidence of learning by individual students. The critical attributes under Exemplary are as follows: (1) There is evidence that students have helped establish the evaluation criteria. (2) The teacher's monitoring of student understanding is sophisticated and continuous; the teacher is constantly "taking the pulse" of the class. (3) The teacher makes frequent use of strategies to elicit information about individual student understanding. (4) Feedback to students is specific and timely and is provided from many sources, including other students.

There are at least two suggestions based on FFT criteria and critical attributes for Using assessment in instruction (3D) that would help move curricula from the

Ineffective range toward the Exemplary range. First, Exemplary criteria suggest that formative assessment are used frequently throughout the lesson. The only way to make constant formative assessment possible throughout a lesson is to make student thinking visible either through written or spoken ideas or responses. Written curricula could promote this by the use of questions and performance tasks requiring all students to participate and discuss. Through the ensuing discussion, teachers would be advised on ideas and responses to specifically look for and on how to respond instructionally if those are not present.

Second, students should be included in the role of as assessor through student self-assessment and peer assessment with timely feedback. If students are aware of the essential question and the assessment criteria, then they can play a more active role in self-assessing their understanding toward meeting those expectations. Further, involving students in making their thinking visible through conversations with peers allows for peer assessment and feedback as well. In order to accomplish this, curricula must have questions and/or performance tasks that explicitly require all students to be involved through partner talk or small group discussion, with structures in place to hear from each and every student. The use of partner talk or Kagan-type structures for small group conversations requires all students to have a response and make it known to someone else. Kagan structures are "instructional strategies designed to promote cooperation and communication in the classroom, boost students' confidence and retain their interest in classroom interaction."[1] Through the use of partner talk or Kagan structures, the curricula would explicitly elicit thought from every student, therefore making student self-assessment and peer assessment more likely. Assessment tools for teachers and students could also be included for each lesson.

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[1] Kagan Publishing and Professional Development, accessed June 1, 2021, https://www.kagan online.com/about_us.php. Kagan provides training for educators and publishes many books that describe a large variety of instructional structures.

Setting Instructional Outcomes

Component 1C (Setting instructional outcomes) had an average score of 1.34 among all five curricula, falling within the Ineffective range. Average scores for this component for each of the five curricula were 1.00, 2.70, 1.00, 1.00, and 1.00, indicating that four curricula scored an average of Ineffective and one scored an average of Accomplished. The Ineffective criteria for this component on the FFT are as follows: (1) Outcomes represent low expectations for students and lack of rigor, and not all of them reflect important learning in the discipline. (2) Outcomes are stated as activities rather than as student learning. (3) Outcomes reflect only one type of learning and only one discipline or strand and are suitable for only some students. The critical attributes under Ineffective are as follows: (1) Outcomes lack rigor. (2) Outcomes do not represent important learning in the discipline. (3) Outcomes are not clear or are stated as activities. (4) Outcomes are not suitable for many students in the class. The five curricula evaluated were best represented by these indicators and critical attributes in Setting instructional outcomes (1C).

For a curricula to score at the highest level (Exemplary) in Setting instructional outcomes (1C), the curricula would need to promote the following: (1) All outcomes represent rigorous and important learning in the discipline. (2) The outcomes are clear, are written in the form of student learning, and permit viable methods of assessment. (3) Outcomes reflect several different types of learning and, where appropriate, represent opportunities for both coordination and integration. (4) Outcomes take into account the varying needs of individual students. The critical attributes under Exemplary are as follows: (1) The teacher plans reference curricular frameworks or blueprints to ensure accurate sequencing. (2) The teacher connects outcomes to previous and future learning. (3) The teacher differentiates outcomes to encourage individual students to take educational risks.

There are at least two suggestions based on FFT criteria and critical attributes for Setting instructional outcomes (1C) that would help move curricula from the Ineffective range toward the Exemplary range. First, it was noted in the majority of the lessons evaluated that there were no clear written outcomes for student learning. There was often a topic or an idea, and although stated as the lesson title or underneath the title, most often it was not communicated to students or written in the form of student learning. Students should not only hear the instructional outcomes but also utilize this concept throughout the lesson. It must be an active component of the lesson, not simply written or stated at the beginning of the lesson.

Second, outcomes should not only be stated clearly in the form of student learning but also reflect rigorous and important learning. Each outcome should somehow play a role in a larger curricular framework or blueprint that allows lesson concepts to relate to and build upon each other. Learning should flow logically from one lesson to the next. The curricula could explain this entire curricular framework or blueprint at the very beginning and then describe how each lesson will play an important role in fulfilling this overall goal.

Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques

Component 3B (Using questioning and discussion techniques) had an average score of 1.38 among all five curricula, falling within the Ineffective range. Average scores for this component for each of the five curricula were 1.20, 1.40, 1.30, 1.00, and 2.00, indicating that four curricula scored an average of Ineffective and one scored an average of Developing. The Ineffective criteria for this component on the FFT are as follows: (1) The teacher's questions are of low cognitive challenge, require single correct responses, and are asked in rapid succession. (2) Interaction between teacher and students is predominantly recitation style, with the teacher mediating all questions and answers. (3) A few students dominate the discussion. The critical attributes under Ineffective are

follows: (1) Questions are rapid-fire and convergent with a single correct answer. (2) Questions do not invite student thinking. (3) All discussion is between teacher and students; students are not invited to speak directly to one another. (4) A few students dominate the discussion. The five curricula evaluated were best represented by these indicators and critical attributes in questioning and discussion techniques (3B).

For a curricula to score at the highest level (Exemplary) in questioning and discussion techniques (3B), the curricula would need to promote the following: (1) The teacher uses a variety or series of questions or prompts to challenge students cognitively, advance high-level thinking and discourse, and promote metacognition. (2) Students formulate many questions, initiate topics, and make unsolicited contributions. (3) Students themselves ensure that all voices are heard in the discussion. The critical attributes under Exemplary are as follows: (1) Students initiate higher-order questions. (2) Students extend the discussion, enriching it. (3) Students invite comments from their classmates during the discussion.

There are at least three suggestions based on FFT criteria and critical attributes for Using questioning and discussion techniques (3B) that would help move curricula from the Ineffective range toward the Exemplary range. The first issue present in the distinction between Ineffective and Exemplary is the type of questions, which can easily be addressed through curricula. Questioning requires a shift from questions presenting low cognitive challenge or requiring a single correct response to those that promote cognitive challenge, higher-order thinking, and metacognition. Questions should prompt the cognitive engagement necessary for true understanding and transference of learning into a Christlike perspective. Questions should direct students toward the established learning outcomes, assessment criteria, targeted student understanding, and real-world application.

The second issue for improving questioning and discussions is not concerned as much with the type of questions as with the way in which questions and answers are

explored and communicated. Students should be allowed time to think before they are required to answer a question. All students should be involved in the conversation, and students should speak directly to one another without teacher mediation. Although this is one aspect of the classroom culture and a teacher-influenced factor, it can be addressed and promoted through written curricula as well. For all questions, the curricula can specifically state the way in which students will answer in order to make their thinking visible. They may be instructed to write thoughts down on paper or simply be provided think time. Next, the curricula would instruct teachers to ask students to either discuss their ideas with a partner, ensuring that both partners have time to answer, or provide a Kagan-type structure for allowing all students in a small group to respond. If necessary, the question and conversation can then be brought to the whole group.

Once students have discussed their ideas with a partner or small group, they are more comfortable and willing to share in the whole group setting. In this whole group conversation, the goal would be for the teacher to start by asking the questions and allowing students to respond to each other and carry the conversation without teacher mediation. The teacher's role would be to challenge student thinking as the group discusses by asking probing questions about responses in order to deepen their understanding. This teacher role would need to be stated in the curricula, possibly including suggestions of a variety of responses and ways to probe student answers in order to promote higher-level thinking and understanding.

Third, students should formulate questions of their own and initiate topics that extend and enrich the conversation. The students themselves should ensure that all voices are heard and invite other students to share their ideas if necessary. Curriculum should explicitly state at certain points throughout the lesson that teachers should elicit questions from each student. A common instructional strategy to promote student inquiry and understanding is "Notice and Wonder," wherein teachers simply ask students to list or explain to a partner what they notice and what they wonder. This method could be used

after reading Scripture, after being presented a performance task, or after a large group discussion.

Group leaders are an effective way to ensure that each person in a small group has responded to a question or task. By assigning a group leader for each task or each lesson and asking group leaders to ensure that they have heard thoughts from each member of their group, it is more likely that all students will participate and that students will hold other students responsible for this participation. Group leaders and their expectations could be recommended and specified in each lesson of the curricula.

Research Question 5

The last research question asked, "What are suggested practices in church contexts using the FFT for evaluation?" Although the FFT was written specifically for evaluating teachers in the school setting, it was easily adapted for curricula evaluation using Domain 1 and Domain 3. After evaluating five curricula written for high school small groups in a church setting, the FFT was found effective using these two domains out of the four total. In order to use the FFT more effectively in the church setting, I would make three suggestions.

First, based on the data and reflection from this research, if the FFT were to be used to evaluate church curricula in the future, I would suggest only using Domain 1 and Domain 3. Some of the language in the criteria and characteristics would need to be adjusted to reflect the evaluation of written curricula as opposed to classroom observation. The majority of the language in the criteria, attributes, and examples uses "the teacher," which would need to be changed to "the curricula." In Domain 3, this language would need to be adjusted not only due to the wording "teacher" instead of "curricula" but also as a reflection of the criteria, attributes, and examples applying more to the *potential* for such instead of the *observation* of such. For example, in Domain 3B (Using questioning and discussion techniques), the second criterion under Accomplished

states, “Teacher creates a genuine discussion among students, providing adequate time for students to respond and stepping aside when appropriate.” An adjustment specifically for the evaluation of curricula might state, “Curriculum promotes a genuine discussion among students, providing the structure and adequate time for students to respond to each other.” If curricula are potentially provided to untrained educators, it is imperative that questioning and discussion strategies are explicitly stated within the curricula to provide the structure necessary to promote discussion among all students.

Second, and moving beyond evaluation of the curricula alone, I would recommend utilizing the FFT, or an adapted FFT specifically for a church setting, to observe classrooms or small groups. If churches choose to offer teacher observations or evaluations, it would be crucial to explain the purpose and goal of the evaluation. It would be essential that teachers viewed classroom observations as beneficial to their growth as a teacher and not as evaluative. The observer would need to be trained not only on how to utilize the FFT accurately but also on how to coach teachers using the FFT in a non-evaluative, growth-minded way. This could potentially be accomplished through some type of outside agency as opposed to church staff, if an evaluative teacher perception is a concern.

If using the FFT to evaluate church classrooms and small group sessions, Domain 2 and Domain 3 could be utilized with little to no adjustments. Domain 2 was not incorporated in this research because it is utilized to assess the elements of the classroom environment, such as respect and rapport, culture of engagement, procedures, behavior, and classroom arrangement. Since curriculum does not play a major role in classroom environment, Domain 2 was not included in this study. However, a church used the FFT for church observations, Domain 2 would be a beneficial addition. In addition to including Domain 2 and Domain 3 for classroom observations, content-specific goals that are applicable specifically for Christian education could be added.

Such goals could target aspects of hermeneutical accuracy, life application, and other areas specific to scriptural understanding and education.

It should also be noted that the utilization of the FFT for curricula evaluation or for church-setting evaluations would not be used in a similar manner as existing church curricula assessment tools. Curriculum assessment tools currently accessed and utilized by churches are primarily for purchasing purposes. These tools consider factors such as age appropriateness, multimedia options, attractiveness, cost, and church-to-home tools. The utilization of the FFT to evaluate curricula would not be for the use of all churches as they decide which curricula to purchase but more for curricula developers and publishers, those in higher education, and potentially church staff members who are knowledgeable about instructional practices and who are willing to invest the time necessary to learn and evaluate the curricula accurately.

Third, another aspect of this research that could be beneficial in the church context would be to offer trainings for small group teachers that focus on the Accomplished and Exemplary criteria for Domain 2 and Domain 3. Many teachers, especially volunteers, do not know or understand the instructional practices necessary for student engagement, understanding, and transferable learning that truly promotes Christlike transformation. Such trainings, provided by trained personnel with a thorough understanding of the FFT and constructivist learning principles, could potentially serve to improve instruction, student learning, and spiritual transformation.

Summary of Analysis

With respect to research question 1, the research revealed that there is not an existing list of best-selling curricula; however, Christian Book Distributors sells a wide variety of evangelical curricula. Using Christian Book Distributors' website, I was able to find their five best-selling publishers and contact each publishing company to find their best-selling curricula for high school small groups. I did not list the names of the best-

selling curricula or the publishing company out of respect and protection for the publishing companies.

With respect to research question 2, the research revealed the average scores and ranges for each curriculum. Curriculum 1 scored an average of 1.77 out of 4.00, which fell within the Developing range. Curriculum 2 scored an average of 2.15 out of 4.00, which fell within the Developing range. Curriculum 3 scored an average of 1.70 of 4.00, which fell within the Developing range. Curriculum 4 scored an average of 1.00 of 4.00, which fell at the lowest point of the Ineffective range. Curriculum 5 scored an average of 2.00 out of 4.00, which fell within the Developing range.

With respect to research question 3, the research revealed that church curricula are not presently written in a way that trained or untrained teachers can effectively follow to promote student thinking, application, and transfer of biblical knowledge and understanding into Christlike living. Based on the scores of each individual component of Domain 1 and Domain 3 as well as the overall averages, curricula typically fell within the Developing or Ineffective range. While an Accomplished range score was achieved a few times for certain components, it was very infrequent. As the overall averages of Domain 1 and Domain 3 scores indicate, the five curricula evaluated range from Ineffective to Developing, with none scoring Accomplished or Exemplary.

With respect to research question 4, the research revealed that there were five components from Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT that scored in the Ineffective range based on an average score from the five curricula evaluated. These five components were as follows: Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness (3E), Designing student assessments (1F), Using assessment in instruction (3D), Setting instructional outcomes (1C), and Using questioning and discussion techniques (3B). To move from Ineffective toward Exemplary based on the FFT indicators and critical attributes, curricula would need to (1) offer suggestions and encouragement for teachers when students struggle to understand or have misconceptions about certain concepts, (2) require the use of teacher

and student assessment during instruction and for further instruction, (3) include student-created or clear, well-understood outcomes for each lesson that are evident throughout the lesson, and (4) include questioning and discussion techniques that involve rigorous thinking and participation by all students and promote meaningful classroom discussion without constant teacher mediation.

With respect to research question 5, the research revealed that with adaptations, the FFT could be used for curricula evaluation. This would be best utilized by curricula designers and publishers, educators, and those in higher education—as opposed to church members looking to adopt a new curricula. The FFT would also be useful for teacher observation and coaching in churches, if performed by trained professionals.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH EVALUATION

This research study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of high school small group curricula in efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of Christian education. In this concluding chapter, I first discuss the research conclusions and the implications of the overarching and supporting research questions. Next, I evaluate the research design by presenting the overall strengths and weakness. Then, I discuss the applications of the research findings, including the contribution of the findings to the precedent literature. Lastly, I propose recommendations for further research.

Research Purpose

The overarching question driving this study was "According to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, what are common strengths and weaknesses among high school small group curricula, and what could increase their effectiveness in promoting transferrable learning and spiritual growth?"

The literature review revealed a decline in Christianity in the U.S. potentially stemming from complications with Christian education within the church. More specifically, church curriculum was proven to be heavily relied upon by teachers in churches, yet the effectiveness of such curricula has not been proven or evaluated. While research exists and was extracted focusing on effective instructional practices, the need for evaluation, and the importance of curriculum in Christian education, research on the evaluation of such curricula was non-existent. In order to know whether the curriculum that church leaders are giving to teachers is effective in promoting transference of learning, true understanding, and transformation into Christlikeness, it was necessary to

conduct this research. This study serves to fill a void in the literature concerning the effectiveness of church curriculum, which provides a large majority of the guidance and instruction for Christian education within the church. The presentation of the findings of this study will lay a foundation for future research and improvements to the quality of curriculum design toward the promotion of Christlike transformation among church-goers.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What are five of the best-selling curricula among evangelical churches for high school Sunday school classes or small groups?
2. How does each curriculum score according to Domains 1 and 3 on the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT)?
3. Is church curriculum presently written in a way that trained or untrained teachers can effectively follow to promote student thinking, application, and transfer of biblical knowledge and understanding into Christlike living?
4. Based on strengths and weaknesses of curricula according to Domains 1 and 3 on the FFT, what are suggestions and further implications for improving church curricula designed for high school students?
5. What are suggested practices in church contexts using the FFT for evaluation?

Research Conclusions

The following research conclusions are organized by research question and based upon the findings presented in chapter 4. This section also explains the implications of the findings associated with each research question as appropriate. The research implications are also grouped by research question.

Research Question 1 Conclusions

Research question 1 asked, “What are five of the best-selling curricula among evangelical churches for high school Sunday school classes or small groups?” In order to evaluate a curriculum that represents the type of instruction to which the majority of high

school students are exposed in evangelical churches through small groups and Sunday school classes, an attempt was made to locate the five best-selling curricula designed for that particular population. This was a difficult task to accomplish with exact precision, as there was not an easy-to-locate list or a methodology of finding this information. After I attempted several different avenues, utilizing Christian Books Distributors became the most effective and accurate way of ascertaining the best-selling curricula.

Christian Books Distributors sell almost all of the curriculum developed for evangelical churches. According to their representative, their website has a sort feature allowing one to organize the search results specifically by curricula for high school small groups or Sunday school classes, and it will sort the results by their best-selling products. Based on this information, the five best-selling curricula were discovered. Due to the nature of this study and the evaluation implications, the curricula were not labeled by name.

Although I was unable to locate an official list of the five best-selling curricula for high school small groups and Sunday school classes, the five selected offer a broad scope of the instructional experience of a large majority of high school students in evangelical churches. Based on the results of the evaluation of these five curricula, implications can be generalized to the experience of the majority of high school students who are exposed to instruction based on curricula designed for high school small groups and Sunday school classes in evangelical churches.

Research Question 2 Conclusions

Research question 2 asked, "How does each curriculum score according to Domains 1 and 3 on the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT)?" Curriculum 1 had an overall range of Developing with a score of 1.77 out of 4.00. In Domain 1, Curriculum 1 fell within the Developing range with a score of 1.62 out of 4.00. In Domain 3, Curriculum 1 fell within the Developing range with a score of 1.50 out of 4.00.

Curriculum 2 scored an average of 2.15 out of 4.00, which fell within the Developing range. In Domain 1, Curriculum 2 fell within the Developing range with a score of 2.40 out of 4.00. In Domain 3, Curriculum 2 fell within the Developing range with a score of 1.90 out of 4.00.

Curriculum 3 scored an average of 1.70 of 4.00, which fell within the Developing range. In Domain 1, Curriculum 3 fell within the Developing range with a score of 1.70 out of 4.00. In Domain 3, Curriculum 3 fell within the Developing range with a score of 1.50 out of 4.00.

Curriculum 4 scored an average of 1.00 of 4.00, which fell at the lowest point of the Ineffective range. In Domain 1, Curriculum 4 fell within the Ineffective range with a score of 1.00 out of 4.00. In Domain 3, Curriculum 4 fell within the Ineffective range with a score of 1.00 out of 4.00.

Curriculum 5 scored an average of 2.00 out of 4.00, which fell within the Developing range. In Domain 1, Curriculum 5 fell within the Developing range with a score of 2.00 out of 4.00. In Domain 3, Curriculum 5 fell within the Developing range with a score of 2.00 out of 4.00.

Overall, four out of the five curricula scored within the Developing range in Domain 1, Domain 3, and a combined average of Domain 1 and Domain 3. One curriculum scored within the Ineffective range in Domain 1, Domain 3, and a combined average of Domain 1 and Domain 3.

Based on this information, there are important implications for Christians, especially the influencers of Christian education such as church leaders, higher education instructors, and curriculum developers, writers, and publishers. The four labels for the range of scores are Ineffective, Developing, Accomplished, and Exemplary. One curriculum scored within the Ineffective range, and four fell within the Developing range. According to these findings, none of the curricula evaluated, representing the five best-

selling curricula among evangelical churches for high school small groups or Sunday school classes, scored within the Accomplished or Exemplary ranges.

The lack of Accomplished and Exemplary scores in Domains 1 and 3 displays the current state of ineffectiveness among curricula designed for small groups and Sunday school classes in evangelical churches, specifically for teens but potentially generalized to all students. Further implications of these results, specifically addressing the results of Domains 1 and 3 of the FFT, call for curriculum reform as pertaining to the components of Domains 1 and 3 of the FFT specifically. These components were addressed thoroughly in chapter 4, and each component analysis must be considered as part of a reformation of curriculum design.

Research Question 3 Conclusions

Research Question 3 asked, "Is church curriculum presently written in a way that trained or untrained teachers can effectively follow to promote student thinking, application, and transfer of biblical knowledge and understanding into Christlike living?" Based on scores' being in the Ineffective and Developing range, a simple answer to this question is "no." After a thorough review of the literature on effective instructional practices in alignment with the requirements of the FFT, the curricula evaluated did not meet current instructional demands and benchmarks.

Scores falling within the Ineffective and Developing range are extremely alarming as they indicate that the majority of high school students are exposed to curricula that is subpar, not accomplishing or exemplifying the necessary instructional strategies and guidance that is essential for student learning. The overall scores of Ineffective and Developing imply that the curricula handed to church educators, often untrained and without knowledge of how to make modifications and incorporate additional learning strategies, are just that—ineffective and developing. Therefore, one can imply that the curricula provided for education in churches, specifically for teens,

combined with a lack of spiritual maturity and education among teacher volunteers, do not adequately provide the support and instructional guidance necessary for promoting student thinking, application, and transfer of knowledge and student understanding leading to Christlike transformation. As a result of ineffective education and therefore the lack of students who are being transformed through an understanding of biblical principles, the declining number of professing Christians in the U.S. will likely remain in a state of decline.

Research Question 4 Conclusions

Research question 4 asked, "Based on strengths and weaknesses of curricula according to Domains 1 and 3 on the FFT, what are suggestions and further implications for improving church curricula designed for high school students?" The strengths and weaknesses of curricula according to Domains 1 and 3 on the FFT provided insightful recommendations and further implications for improving church curricula designed for high school students, which can be generalized to students of all ages. While there were a few components of Domain 1 or Domain 3 of the FFT that scored Developing or Accomplished according to the FFT, there were five components that had an average score in the Ineffective range. Having analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the curricula, I can now offer several recommendations based on the areas of lowest scores and highest need. The components averaging Ineffective range scores were as follows: (1) Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness (3E), (2) Designing student assessments (1F), (3) Using assessments in instruction (3D), (4) Setting instructional outcomes (1C), and (5) Using questioning and discussion techniques (3B).

Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness (3E). Three recommendations for improving curriculum design were made in chapter 4 based on the scores and weaknesses observed in the Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness component. First, the curriculum should state common misunderstandings and misconceptions as well

as offer teachers opportunities to enhance student learning. Second, the curriculum should have potential resources or discussion topics that can help teachers address common misunderstandings and misconceptions. Third, the curriculum should indicate that a lesson is not considered complete until all students understand the content, which may include possibilities for supplemental follow-up lessons.

Although flexibility and responsiveness could be considered skills and characteristics of the teacher and therefore not addressed through written curricula, it has been proven that such skills or characteristics are possible to address through curriculum. This is extremely helpful for church teacher volunteers who are often untrained as educators. By listing common misunderstandings and misconceptions with additional resources for support, the curriculum makes teachers aware of what to look and listen for, and it equipped them to address those issues. Since curricula have scores in the Ineffective and Developing ranges, one can predict that curriculum design for a variety of ages would need to be evaluated and adapted based upon the Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness indicators, research findings, and recommendations.

Founded on the research findings in Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness as well as the recommendations based upon the Exemplary characteristics, the following implication can be made. Without specific guidance from the curriculum, teachers would be responsible for addressing misconceptions, locating and obtaining resources to address misconceptions, and ensuring that misconceptions are addressed before the lesson is considered complete. Based on the literature reviewed, many church volunteer teachers are not well trained in education, many churches do not offer observations or trainings, and many volunteers are not spiritually mature themselves. One could imply that if the curriculum does not specifically state that teachers should be looking for misconceptions, addressing misconceptions, and providing the necessary resources or text to do so, then these things are most likely not being done. This would allow misconceptions to remain and the lesson to be considered complete

whether students fully and correctly understood the lesson or not, possibly leading to errors in biblical understanding and foundations for life.

Designing student assessments (1F). Based on the scores and weaknesses observed in the Designing student assessments component, three recommendations for improving curriculum design were made. First, there must be clear instructional outcomes established, and the assessment must match these outcomes. Once again, assessments are not necessarily end-of-unit tests but some type of measurement of students learning throughout a lesson and at the completion of a lesson with the intent of ensuring student understanding. Second, based on ongoing observation and assessment throughout the lesson, curricula should include possible accommodations and adaptations for students with special needs if they struggle to obtain the targeted understanding. Third, assessments should require the utilization of understanding gained throughout the lesson in order to connect to real-world situations regarding the targeted outcomes.

Founded on the research findings in Designing student assessments and the recommendations based upon the Exemplary characteristics, the following implication can be made. Due to the long-held view that assessments were synonymous with tests and grades, churches and curriculum designers have often neglected the implementation of assessment as a tool for better instruction and student understanding. Based on the evaluation results, one can assume that if curriculum is not addressing assessments, then it is not addressed in small groups or Sunday school classrooms. This implies that students understanding is not evaluated, through formative or summative assessment, in light of the targeted outcomes, and therefore it is largely possible that students are not gaining the intended knowledge and application from lessons. If students are physically present yet intellectually absent, passive, or confused, then Christian educators are not able to obtain their goal of leading students to grow in their understanding of God and transform into the perspective and likeness of Christ.

A reformation of curriculum design must include assessment practices as they are now understood and utilized. This reformation, most likely applicable to curriculum written for all ages, also needs the inclusion of adaptations and accommodations based on assessment observations and the assessment's inclusion of real-world application concerning students' understanding gained from their learning throughout the lesson.

Using assessments in instruction (3D). Similar to Designing student assessments, the Using assessments in instruction component centers on utilizing the assessment information in order to direct instruction. Two recommendations for improving curriculum design were made in chapter 4 based on the scores and weaknesses observed in this component. First, curriculum design must require visible thinking among all students, and formative assessment should be utilized in light of this observable thinking. Curriculum should note specific concepts that should be reflected in visible student thinking as well as common misunderstandings and avenues for addressing these misconceptions. Second, curriculum should require students to self-assess as well as peer-assess, which includes offering feedback that moves others' thinking forward.

Founded on the research findings in Using assessments in instruction and the recommendations based upon the Exemplary characteristics, the following implication can be made. If these results are generalized to curricula for all ages, then one can assume that curriculum design does not currently utilize assessment in order to direct instruction. Therefore, one can also imply that whether students are understanding the content presented or not, instruction may likely carry on unaware of these misconceptions.

The short-term effect of ongoing instruction unguided by summative or formative assessment results would potentially be that students are present for each lesson yet are not completely understanding the concepts taught or—worse—are developing misunderstandings about those targeted outcomes. In Christian education, this

can potentially be devastating as the concepts taught are the only version of truth upon which students are building their foundational beliefs and perspectives.

The long-term effect of a series or years of instruction unguided by student understanding as apparent through assessment is the likelihood that students develop misconceptions about or have a lack of understanding, application, and transference of biblical truth that is required for a shift to a Christlike perspective and therefore a life devoted to the pursuit and glory of God. Assessment is more than grades and tests. It is absolutely essential for the guidance and adjustments that must be present or made in instruction so that the identified outcomes are met among all students. Curriculum design must be reformed, accounting for this necessary adjustment in the utilization of assessment.

Setting instructional outcomes (1C). Based on the scores and weaknesses observed in the Setting instructional outcomes component, two recommendations for improving curriculum design were made. First, the majority of lessons evaluated did not include clear outcomes for student learning. Not only should students see or hear these outcomes for each lesson, but such outcomes should be an active component throughout the delivery of instruction, most likely included in formative or summative assessments. Second, the outcomes selected should reflect rigorous learning that plays an important role in a larger curricular framework plan. This implies that each lesson should be connected and flow logically, which is most easily accomplished by designing each lesson as part of a larger unit with separate but cohesive parts that build upon each other.

Founded on the research findings in Setting instructional outcomes and the recommendations based upon the Exemplary characteristics, the following implication can be made. Because the curricula evaluated reflected a lack of clearly stated outcomes, the absence of outcomes incorporated throughout each lesson, and often a disconnection among individual outcomes flowing from a larger goal, one can imply that this has

negatively affected student learning. Students must be not only aware of but also bought into the purpose of their learning in order to attend and engage with the instruction in a way that facilitates true understanding. These results imply that students may potentially passively attend to a lesson designed for a certain understanding yet by the end of the lesson are unaware of what they have learned, why it matters, or how it fits into a larger concept that applies to their life and sanctification. When teens or younger children are asked what they learned in small group or Sunday school, they often answer "nothing" or "I don't remember." An intentional use of student outcomes at the Exemplary level would increase their ability not only to focus and recall their learning but also to transfer that learning in order to cause a shift in perspective and Christlike living.

Using questioning and discussion techniques (3B). Three recommendations for improving curriculum design were made in chapter 4 based on the scores and weaknesses observed in the Using questioning and discussion techniques component. First, questions should promote a cognitive challenge, metacognition, and higher-order thinking. Second, all students should be given time to think before being asked to answer challenging questions. All students should be involved in the conversation and speak directly to each other without teacher mediation. This implies that the role of the teacher has shifted from that of knowledge provider, conversation mediator, and judge of right and wrong answers to that of intentional planner of questions requiring deep thinking, strategist whose strategies ensures that all voices and ideas are heard, and facilitator of great conversation and thought. Third, a shift in student responsibility must be reflected in curriculum design. Students should be asked to formulate their own questions, initiate topics, and ensure that all voices are heard in conversations by inviting others to share ideas if necessary. This is a vital component of instruction that is often neglected by curriculum designers and by the teachers implementing the curriculum. While at first this may seem to be a student responsibility that is out of the control of teachers and

dependent upon certain types of students, curriculum can and must be written to promote this type of student behavior if it is expected to happen. Directions for partner talk, Kagan-type structures for specific conversation routines, and other tools intentionally eliciting visible thinking from all students must be utilized in curriculum design.

Founded on the research findings in Using questioning and discussion techniques and the recommendations based upon the Exemplary characteristics, the following implication can be made. In the history of education, behavior expectations have typically dominated the constituents of a successful classroom. The picture of still and quiet students politely raising their hand until called upon by a teacher was previously the norm. Not only were only a few students involved, but typically the question posed was designed with one single correct answer in mind, requiring low cognitive challenge. Based on the Ineffective and Developing scores in Using questioning and discussion techniques, one can imply that for the most part curriculum design continues to reflect this type of passive learning environment, which has now been proven ineffective. It also implies that students can remain passive in their small groups or Sunday school classes, only thinking at the basic recall level when called upon or when they choose to raise their hand to answer. If all students are not required to make their thinking visible through conversation or written expression based upon questions requiring cognitive challenge and metacognition, then one cannot assume that they are thinking about the content at all, much less at the level necessary for transference of learning or transformation into Christlikeness.

Research Question 5 Conclusions

Research question 5 asked, “What are suggested practices in church contexts using the FFT for evaluation?” Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations were made for utilizing the FFT for the church setting. First, if the FFT were to be utilized in evaluating curricula for churches, then it is recommended to only

use Domain 1 and Domain 3. Also, some of the language would need to be modified from specifically evaluating classroom instruction to focusing on curriculum only. A suggested version of Domain 1 and Domain 3 with language adjustments specifically for curricula evaluation is found in appendix 1.

Second, and moving beyond curriculum evaluation, it was recommended that the FFT is utilized by churches to observe and evaluate classroom practice in order to improve instruction. This would include Domain 2 of the FFT as well, as it focuses on the classroom environment and thus could not be utilized for this study yet offers valuable information for improving the classroom culture for effective learning. Evaluators and instructional coaches should be trained to use the FFT for church classroom observation, so it may be best practice to offer this service from an outside agency working to improve church small group and Sunday school instruction. Along with this concept, it was recommended that churches offer training for teachers, specifically in Domain 2 and Domain 3 of the FFT by looking at Accomplished and Exemplary characteristics and offering instructional tools and strategies to increase effectiveness in these areas.

Two implications stem from these suggestions. First, one can imply from these findings that curriculum reformation is necessary in order to meet the standards and research-based instructional practices of modern education. A modified version of the FFT Domain 1 and Domain 3 that is more specific to the evaluation of curriculum should be utilized for the evaluation of curriculum for small groups and Sunday school classes for evangelical churches in order to measure effectiveness and create a sense of urgency for change. Second, one can imply that it may be necessary for outside agencies to aid in the work of improving church education. This would be accomplished through the use of FFT observations and coaching by trained professionals and offering trainings for teacher volunteers in effective instructional practices based on the criteria established on the FFT.

Evaluation of the Research Design

The FFT is designed and typically utilized for classroom and teacher observation, but for this particular research, it was adapted to evaluate written curricula. Especially considering this adjustment, I was pleased with the application of the FFT, the validity of the results, and the potential use of the data collected and analyzed. In what follows, I address several strengths and weaknesses of this particular research design.

Research Strengths

One of the strengths of the research design was the ability to use an existing framework for evaluation that was research-based and widely recognized as an excellent tool for teacher evaluation. Also, I have been trained yearly to use this tool, and because I have used the FFT for several years, it has become very familiar. Second, the decision to use the FFT to look specifically at the curriculum itself as opposed to the curriculum taught in the classroom was helpful in that it did not have to account for teacher adjustments and various levels of teacher skill and effectiveness. Doing so provided a clearer picture of the potential that each curriculum provides for effective learning. The results were able to provide valuable information about the strengths and weaknesses of each curriculum that can be generalized to the majority of church curricula for high school small groups and Sunday school classes. The research design made it possible to provide valuable information about the potential for effective instruction and student learning based solely on the curricula, and therefore it provided valuable information for curriculum writers and publishers about the criteria for Accomplished and Exemplary curricula for Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT and all components within each domain.

Research Weaknesses

Although the FFT was an existing research-based tool used for education evaluation, there are still some complications in utilizing this tool for research purposes.

Evaluating curricula utilizing the FFT instead of evaluating actual teaching was a strength of the design but also somewhat of a weakness. The FFT is intended to be used as a tool for evaluating classroom instruction; therefore, some of the wording does not completely fit the evaluation of curricula alone. Because I was very familiar with the FFT and the goal of each component in Domain 1 and Domain 3, I could accurately score each component even the language was written for classroom use. For example, Domain 3E (Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness) scored very low for each curriculum, and it is definitely better fit for evaluating teachers in classrooms than curricula. Although curricula can provide suggestions, recommendations, and encouragement for teachers to be flexible and responsive, it would be extremely hard to see flexibility and responsiveness in written curricula. This component perhaps should have been left out of curricula evaluation or at least should be modified for curricula evaluation in the future.

There were some modifications that need to be made if further research were conducted utilizing the FFT for curricula evaluation. In future research, it would be beneficial to score the curricula alone using an adapted version of the FFT and then utilize the original FFT to score a teacher using the curricula in the small group setting in order to get a bigger picture of the effectiveness and potential modifications that could be made to written curricula.

Also, as with any evaluation tool similar to the FFT, there is typically some subjectivity to the assessment. In the initial training for evaluation qualification using the FFT to observe teachers, there is a section on eliminating bias as a scorer. Although I have completed the training and understand the role of bias that could exist and how to best compensate for this potential, there continues to be some variation in how two scorers may rate the same component. I have passed the scoring assessment each year for the past seven years; however, there is still the potential for a slight variation in scoring among evaluators.

Research Applications

By addressing research question 2, 3, and 4, the findings suggest that curricula range from Ineffective to Developing; that they are not currently written in a way that teachers with various amounts of educational training can effectively follow in order to promote student thinking, application, and transfer of biblical understanding; and that there are deficiencies in curricula specifically in the areas averaging Ineffective ratings (Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness [3E], Designing student assessments [1F], Using assessments in instruction [3D], Setting instructional outcomes [1C], and Using questioning and discussion techniques [3B]). If findings suggest as much about the curricula evaluated, then it is highly likely that instruction in small groups and Sunday school classrooms in churches does not reflect or offer clear and connected outcomes, assessments designed for ongoing instructional guidance or end-of-lesson understanding, quality and thought-provoking questions and conversations, ongoing formative assessment that uncovers misconceptions, and additional resources to address misconceptions or to support students with special needs. Based on these findings and implications, three applications are suggested.

Curriculum Design Reformation for Churches

The research findings must apply to curriculum design reformation. The current design used in most curricula, including all five that were evaluated, is based on the way-truth-life method previously known as the boy-book-boy method that originated with Lois LeBar.[1] It is rightly based on the understanding that students must be interested before they can learn effectively. The goal is to present an entry activity or hook that leads students to the learning outcomes in an engaging way.

[1] Lois E. LeBar, *Education That Is Christian* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1995), 101.

As findings suggest, learning outcomes are not typically stated or understood by students in written curricula. In addition, many curricula published today begin with a hook or activity to interest students that is time consuming and somewhat disconnected to the learning outcomes. If students are not invited to make the direct connection to the targeted learning outcome, then the connection not only falls short of the intended purpose but also wastes time that could be better spent delving into understanding and applying the concepts taught. It is necessary not to abandon the boy-book-boy method but to alter it based on new research on effective instruction and the importance of student inquiry in the learning process.

To address the deficiency of setting instructional outcomes and introducing the outcomes to students with engagement in mind, I recommend utilizing an Inquiry Design Method for Christian Education (IDMCE) for transformational learning based on the IDM approach developed by Kathy Swan, John Lee, and S. G. Grant.[2] Although it is not the only curriculum design method that would address the deficiencies uncovered through curriculum evaluation, it does address each deficiency and promote student inquiry. IDMCE builds upon LeBar's boy-book-boy method. However, it also incorporates student inquiry and ownership of learning while effectively establishing clear instructional outcomes, including ongoing formative assessment and summative, end-of-unit assessments to guide instruction, and incorporating intellectually engaging questions, tasks, collaboration, and discussion in which students enthusiastically participate in order to achieve the targeted understanding established in the beginning of the unit.

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[2] Lindsey Wilkerson, "Constructivist Curriculum for Christian Transformation," *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* (January 2021), https://doi.org/10.1177/073989 1320985870. This article presents a faith-based constructivist model for Christian education and introduces the IDM unit planning model. It thoroughly explains the original IDM model and a faith-based modified version of IDM with examples. This will provide an in-depth explanation of IDM and how to utilize this method for curriculum design. I have modified the language used in this article from faith-based IDM to Inquiry Design Method for Christian Education (IDMCE).

IDMCE is a backward-planning process that begins with selecting a unit topic that facilitates inquiry through a compelling question. IDMCE begins each unit with an overarching compelling question. This compelling question is both rigorous and relevant, meaning that (1) it involves high levels of intellectual engagement and deep understanding of the learning outcomes and (2) it is interesting and thus sparks interest among students. Instead of beginning each lesson with an activity somewhat disconnected from the targeted outcomes and often lacking any intellectual engagement that ends up wasting instructional time, an IDMCE unit would begin with student inquiry. Students will list questions they would like to learn more about in order to effectively answer the compelling question. By doing this, not only are they engaging intellectually in the topic for exploration and beginning to think deeply about the concept, but they are also creating supporting questions that will later serve as assessment questions and set the course for lessons to follow.

In the initial IDMCE lesson, the curriculum would not only introduce the compelling question and provide time for students to develop the supporting questions but also include an entry event that would aid in sparking student interest and provoking student inquiry. The entry event, presentation of the compelling question, and the facilitation of student-created supporting questions would provide students with the goal for learning throughout the unit and for each individual lesson within the unit, staying rigorously aligned to the curriculum developer's intended learning outcomes.

The next phase of IDMCE includes creating a final assessment that is essentially the same as asking the original compelling question but allows students an opportunity to answer the compelling question through multiple avenues, such as writing, posters, videos, and presentations. Next, the designer uses supporting questions to facilitate the design of lessons within the unit. These supporting questions are pre-selected based on learning outcomes guided by the compelling question and targeted student understandings, but they are also based on the predictability of student questions

that will arise from students asking questions about the compelling question.[3] The supporting questions will guide each lesson as the lesson designer will combine Scripture, learning tasks, and questions to create an opportunity for students to gain the understanding necessary to thoroughly answer the supporting question as they build their understanding of the compelling unit question. By the end of a unit, students have gained deep understanding of each supporting question, and in doing so, they have developed a thorough understanding of the compelling question so that it can be answered by each individual student.

IDMCE unit design would aid in improving curriculum design in a multitude of ways, including the five areas scoring Ineffective in this study. First, IDMCE would aid in the establishment, presentation, and student understanding of the learning outcomes. It would include Exemplary characteristics of assessment design and the utilization of assessment to guide instruction. IDMCE would also facilitate learning tasks and questions of high intellectual value that promote greater levels of thinking, metacognition, and student conversation. The last area identified as Ineffective pertained to teacher flexibility and responsiveness, which will be built into the unit design when utilizing IDMCE. While curriculum designers could prepare supporting questions that align with the compelling question and the established learning outcomes, they are relying on predictability for student questions that will be created about the compelling question. There must be some flexibility and responsiveness written into curriculum in order to combine student questions with the supporting questions pre-selected. This may include offering ways to include student questions that were not chosen as the supporting questions in the curriculum. In all, the IDMCE approach to transformational learning

[3] This procedure is based on the Question Formulation Technique (QFT). It is a strategy utilized to improve learners' ability to ask good questions that lead to enhancing their learning and understanding. It also promotes intellectual engagement and deep thinking about the topic.

could offer curriculum developers the foundation necessary to move curriculum from Ineffective and Developing to Exemplary based on the FFT criteria.

Assessment Utilization for Churches

The next application of research findings relates specifically to assessment. Assessment in education has shifted from the concept of tests and grades to an instructional focus based on formative and summative assessment. Therefore, the findings of the research are valid for church curricula. Curriculum design for churches must adjust to comply with this new understanding and benefit of assessment. Ongoing and end-of lesson or end-of-unit assessment should be written into curriculum in order to promote, correct, and evaluate student understanding so as to accomplish the learning outcomes established for each lesson, each unit, and ultimately Christian formation. Furthermore, Charlotte Danielson suggests that when students are involved in creating assessments, they become more purposeful and engaged in their own learning.[4] By implementing IDMCE, curriculum would lead students in the development of the assessment tasks and questions, which would become their guiding inquiry for the unit as well as their ongoing and final assessments through the use of an overarching compelling question and several supporting questions.

FFT Utilization for Churches

The FFT should be utilized in the church setting in two ways. First, curriculum designed for small groups and Sunday school classes of all ages should be evaluated using the FFT, using the model modified specifically intended for curriculum evaluation given in appendix 1. This modified model focuses specifically on Domain 1 and Domain 3 to ensure that curriculum is written for maximum instructional effectiveness and

[4] Charlotte Danielson, *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2007), 62.

student understanding. This tool should not necessarily be used for purchasing purposes by untrained church members or leaders but by those in the field of curriculum design, higher education, or anyone influencing the development of curriculum and lesson materials. The purpose of this evaluation is not to separate poorly written curriculum from well-written curriculum but to lead the way in establishing standards for all curriculum so that drastic improvements are made in Christian education and Christian formation.

Second, the FFT should be utilized in the church setting for instructional evaluation, coaching, and training targeting the best instructional practices identified in the Accomplished and Exemplary ranges of the FFT. Observation and evaluation should be done by trained professionals. They must have training and experience in educational practices, and they should be qualified to utilize the FFT by attending online trainings and passing the required evaluations. Observing and coaching teachers requires not only a high level of knowledge about effective instructional practices but also the mentality of coach and partner as opposed to evaluator. To effectively coach and partner with teachers, one must be able to use the FFT as a guide to point to effective instructional goals, help the teachers being observed reflect on their own practices compared with the FFT targeted goals, and assist them in finding ways to shift their instructional practices accordingly. If this process feels to teachers more like an evaluation than a partnership and coaching session, then they will most likely feel threatened, distrusted, or less valuable. The observer must keep in mind the goal of the evaluation, which would be to assist teachers in improving their classroom culture and instructional effectiveness in order to aid students' growth into Christlikeness. Therefore, this process may be most effectively done by an outside agency.

Contribution of Research to the Precedent Literature

This research filled a void in the existing literature by utilizing the FFT to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum designed for small groups and Sunday school classes in evangelical churches. While evaluation tools existed in order to guide churches in the purchasing of curriculum based on factors such as price, scope, materials provided, and other non-instructional factors, there was no existing literature on the effectiveness of curriculum focusing specifically on current instructional practices deemed effective. There was also a gap in literature concerning the use of the FFT in any capacity in churches. Therefore, this study presents foundational information on the effectiveness of church curriculum and offers insight into the effectiveness of church small group and Sunday school education.

Further Research

Based on the research findings, implications, and applications discussed above, there are several recommendations for further research pertaining to the evaluation of curriculum developed for small group and Sunday school classes in evangelical churches.

First, the research should widen to include the evaluation of curriculum designed for all ages. While this study specifically focused on small group and Sunday school curriculum for teens, curriculum from preschool to adults could also be evaluated, as the FFT can be utilized for all ages. Doing so would provide a more thorough scope of the effectiveness of curriculum within small groups and Sunday school classes within the church as a whole. The revised FFT in appendix 1 could be utilized for this work.

Second, although the FFT can be adapted for use in churches, it is not designed specifically for church use. The FFT could be modified by keeping the strong instructional focus based on recent research of instructional practices while additions are made in the inclusion and reliance upon Scripture and truth. Although several components of Domain 1 and Domain 3 mention knowledge of content and the teacher's appropriate use of content knowledge and vocabulary, those components could be further

specified for the rebalance of Scripture. This would require a literature review of common practices and beliefs concerning the reliance upon Scripture and the appropriate hermeneutical approaches within the evangelical church.

Third, a version of the FFT modified specifically for church observations could be utilized to evaluate instruction in small groups and Sunday school classrooms. This would focus specifically on Domain 2 and Domain 3 of the FFT. In fact, the curricula could be evaluated utilizing the new FFT for curriculum evaluation of Domain 1 and Domain 3, and then the FFT Domain 2 and Domain 3 altered for church evaluations could be used to evaluate the same curriculum actually being utilized in the classroom. Doing so would offer insight into the effectiveness of curricula, the ability of teachers to implement curricula, and the effectiveness of education in small groups and Sunday school classrooms in evangelical churches.

Conclusion

Several statements from chapters 1 and 2 are critically important as the focus shifts to further research in the area of curriculum evaluation. First, researchers must remember and focus on the main goal of Christian education presented in chapter 2 (see pp. 18-19): “The goal of Christian education is the promotion of faith development and spiritual formation” and “The ultimate goal of development is that God is glorified as we become more like Christ in all facets of life.” This must be the ultimate driving force of further evaluation and investigation.

Second, researchers must be mindful of the following statements from chapter 1 (see p. 15): “Christian education has not proven itself effective, and evangelical churches are reliant upon curriculum to make up for the fact that many teachers are untrained, not observed or coached regularly, and often spiritually immature themselves. Can small group curriculum for teens effectively carry this burden? If curriculum bears this weight, can designers strengthen curriculum enough to bear the load effectively?”

While the findings of this study revealed that curriculum is not effectively bearing this weight, the hope is that this study and further research would promote a reformation in curriculum design that reflects the research-based instructional practices evident in the Exemplary criterion of the FFT.

CHAPTER 6

UTILIZING RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter, the research findings and FFT Accomplished and Exemplary criteria will be utilized for guidance in purchasing, supplementing, and designing curricula. An evaluative tool will be created, explained, and verified based on FFT Accomplished and Exemplary criteria for churches, schools, or individuals to effectively measure the instructional potential of existing curriculum for purchasing purposes. A supplemental tool will also be created and explained that will aid teachers and individuals in making necessary adaptations to existing curricula in order to improve instructional effectiveness. Lastly, IDMCE, a curriculum design method for highly effective instruction will be introduced and proven effective based on the established vision for Christian education and FFT Accomplished and Exemplary criteria.

Evaluative Tool for Curriculum Purchasing

Utilizing the exemplary criteria for each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT as well as findings from the research including suggestions and implications, an evaluative tool will be created for churches, schools, or an individual wishing to purchase a packaged curriculum. The curriculum evaluation tool will be a checklist organized by the necessary criteria for each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3. The evaluative criteria for each component will be included in a table following the description, and the complete evaluation tool will be included in appendix 2. The checklist can be scored based on the criteria for each component.

For each suggested criterion, a rating scale from 1 to 4 will be utilized for evaluating the curricula. A score of 1 indicates that the component is not present, a 2

indicates that the component is not typically present or present in very limited capacity, a 3 indicates that the component is usually present or present at an acceptable level, and a 4 indicates that the component is always present or present at high levels. There will be an area to score each criterion of each component individually, each component of 1A-1F and 3A-3E, Domain 1 and Domain 3 overall, and each curricula evaluated overall based on the sum of all scores.

Domain 1A Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 1A (Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: knowledge of content, structure of the discipline, prerequisite relationships, and content-related pedagogy.[1] Curriculum should display knowledge of how the discipline has evolved, an understanding of the relationships of content within disciplines, an understanding of the concepts and skills that serve as prerequisite knowledge for learning, an awareness of typical misconceptions among students and how to address them, and knowledge of particular pedagogical strategies best paired with the particular content knowledge.[2]

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 1A will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

[1] Charlotte Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," Kentucky Department of Education, 2014, https://education.ky.gov/teachers/PGES/TPGES/Documents/Kentucky%20Framework%20for%20Teaching.pdf, 7.

[2] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 7.

Table 12. Evaluation of component 1A

1A: Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy				
Curriculum displays extensive knowledge about important concepts in the specific content and how it relates to other content.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum reflects an understanding of prerequisite knowledge and relationships among topics and provides the cognitive structures necessary for students to link knowledge and ensure understanding.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum reflects a wide range of effective pedagogical approaches.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes possible misconceptions and the necessary content and strategies to address them before proceeding.	1	2	3	4

Domain 1B Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 1B (Demonstrating knowledge of students), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: knowledge of child and adolescent development; knowledge of the learning process; knowledge of students' skills, knowledge, and language proficiency; knowledge of students' interests and cultural heritage; and knowledge of students' special needs.[3] Curriculum should display a belief in students' active intellectual engagement with content and the importance of knowing students well, including their cognitive, social, and emotional developmental stages; interests; cultural backgrounds; and special needs.[4] While curriculum cannot address the specific types of students in each class because it is written and designed for a wide variety of same-aged students, curriculum can ensure active intellectual engagement with content, developmentally and socially appropriate student interests, and the necessary guidance, instructions, and resources for uncovering and addressing individual student needs.

[3] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 8.

[4] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 8.

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 1B will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

Table 13. Evaluation of component 1B

1B: Demonstrating knowledge of students				
Curriculum requires active intellectual engagement with content for all students.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides an opportunity for teachers to attain information about the levels of cognitive development among students.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes content that is applicable to student interests.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum displays an awareness of "high," "medium," and "low" students and utilizes this in lesson plans and strategies.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes material appropriate for a wide variety of cultural heritages and provides students an opportunity to draw from their cultural experiences.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum addresses possible special needs that may impede learning. Resources and suggested modifications are incorporated into learning plans.	1	2	3	4

Domain 1C Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 1C (Setting instructional outcomes), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: value, sequence, and alignment; clarity; balance; and suitability for diverse learners.[5] Instructional outcomes are the desired learning that all activities are directed toward. By setting the desired instructional outcomes for learning, one is establishing exactly what students must learn for instruction

[5] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 10.

to be effective. This is not what students will do, but rather what students will learn. The instructional outcomes should indicate the most important learning, and the accompanying student assessments should provide students an opportunity to display their understanding of the established learning outcomes. Learning outcomes should dictate the resources, learning activities, and methods of assessment utilized. Instructional outcomes should reflect different types of learning, including factual, procedural, conceptual understanding, thinking, reasoning, and application as well as collaboration and communication strategies. Finally, instructional outcomes should allow students to connect their learning to other content and to past and future learning.[6]

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 1C will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

Table 14. Evaluation of component 1C

1C: Setting instructional outcomes				
Curriculum provides rigorous instructional outcomes reflective of important concepts. Curriculum also provides directions for teachers to effectively introduce these outcomes to students.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes clear instructional outcomes in the form of what students will learn, not what students will do.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes instructional outcomes with viable methods of assessment.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes instructional outcomes reflective of different types of learning, including knowledge, conceptual understanding, reasoning, and application.	1	2	3	4

[6] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 10.

Table 14 continued

1C: Setting instructional outcomes				
Curriculum includes instructional outcomes that provide an opportunity for coordination and integration of other concepts and reflect previous and future learning.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes instructional outcomes that display consideration of the needs of each individual student.	1	2	3	4

Domain 1D Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 1D (Demonstrating knowledge of resources), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: knowledge of resources for classroom use, resources for extended content knowledge, and resources for students.[7] Wise selection of resources is a key component in improving teacher and student knowledge and understanding. Resources can be those utilized in the classroom during instruction, by the students outside of the classroom for their own personal growth, and by teachers in order to further their own personal knowledge and growth. Resources should be wisely selected and modified as necessary in order to provide students an appropriate level of challenge and support. Resources should come from a variety of places outside of the school or church.[8]

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 1D will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

[7] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 12.

[8] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 12.

Table 15. Evaluation of component 1D

1D: Demonstrating knowledge of resources				
Curriculum displays extensive knowledge of related resources.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum utilizes a variety of resources appropriate to the needs of the teacher and each individual student.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes a variety of resources for class time use.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes potential resources for the expansion of the teacher's knowledge and personal growth.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes potential resources for the expansion of individual students' knowledge and personal growth outside of class time.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum resources used for class time are aligned to the skill level of students and time restraints for in-class instruction. Resources are summarized, modified, or adapted as necessary for classroom instruction and for a variety of student special needs.	1	2	3	4

Domain 1E Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 1E (Designing coherent instruction), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: knowledge of learning activities, instructional materials and resources, instructional groups, and lesson and unit structure.[9] Designing coherent instruction includes combining the knowledge of content, students, and resources with the instructional outcomes that results in a series of learning activities. Curriculum should display an understanding of the active nature of learning and sequence activities in a manner that advances student learning through thoughtful construction of lessons requiring intellectual engagement among students. A well-designed lesson plan addresses individual and groups of students' needs. Effective instructional design accounts for the specific needs of students and solicits instructional ideas from students.[10]

[9] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 13.

[10] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 13.

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 1E will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

Table 16. Evaluation of component 1E

1E: Designing coherent instruction				
Curriculum displays a series of learning activities designed to engage all students in high-level cognitive activity.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum displays a combination of appropriately challenging resources, in-depth content knowledge, and an understanding of students' needs.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides some opportunity for student choice.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum displays learning activities with possibilities for differentiation and suggested grouping patterns.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides resources for differentiation.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum displays well-structured, clear units and lessons with appropriate time allocations for each activity.	1	2	3	4

Domain 1F Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 1F (Designing student assessments), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: assessment components that display congruence with instructional outcomes, criteria and standards, design of formative assessments, and use for planning.[11] The design of student assessments should include assessments of students learning and assessments for student learning—both summative and formative. Summative assessments, assessments of student learning, should ensure that students have met the desired instructional outcomes and that they are designed in a

[11] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 15.

manner reflective of the full range of learning outcomes. Such assessments may be adapted for the individual needs of students. Formative assessments, assessments for student learning, should allow teachers an opportunity to incorporate guiding assessments into their instruction in order to address misconceptions and modify instruction as needed throughout the lesson to ensure student understanding. Formative assessments must be incorporated into lesson plans, used in an ongoing manner, and may be used by teachers and students to monitor the learning progress toward the established instructional outcomes.[12]

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 1F will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

Table 17. Evaluation of component 1F

1E: Designing student assessments				
Curriculum includes assessments that fully align with and measure all instructional outcomes.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides evidence of student inclusion in the contribution of assessment development.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides potential assessment modifications for individual student needs.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum utilizes formative assessment (assessment for learning) in each lesson with suggested instruction, questioning, or discussion based on the results.	1	2	3	4

[12] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 15.

Table 17 continued

1E: Designing student assessments				
Curriculum guides teachers in utilizing the assessment results for future instruction and possible modifications to instruction.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes student participation in the development of rubrics and the utilization of personal assessment data to further learning.	1	2	3	4

Domain 3A Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 3A (Communicating with students), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: expectations for learning, directions and procedures, explanation of content, and use of oral and written language.[13] Curriculum should convey to students a clear purpose for their learning; directions for activities should be clear and easy to follow; and concepts should be presented with accuracy, clarity, and imagination. Explanations should be accompanied with easy to understand and relatable analogies and metaphors that link new learning to student interest and previous knowledge. While clearly displaying the purpose of learning and a process for disseminating information and learning tasks, curriculum also provides the time and space for students to think on their own and contribute to extending the content. Language should be used and introduced in a scaffolded manner that challenges and extends students' vocabularies and understanding.[14]

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 3A will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

[13] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 27.

[14] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 27.

Table 18. Evaluation of component 3A

3A: Communicating with students				
Curriculum provides directions or strategies for teachers to clearly communicate the instructional purpose of lessons to students and links this purpose to student interest.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes clear and accurate directions, anticipates possible student misunderstandings, and provides guidance for potential confusion.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides instruction for clear explanations of content while also developing student conceptual understanding through an appropriate amount of challenge and strategic scaffolding.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides strategies and structures to intellectually engage students in dialogue and explicitly promotes opportunities for students to extend the content and explain concepts to each other.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes clear and correct utilization of vocabulary appropriate to students' age and interests and provides opportunities to enrich students' vocabularies.	1	2	3	4

Domain 3B Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 3B (Questioning and discussion techniques), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: quality of questions/prompts, discussion techniques, and student participation components.[15] It is essential that questioning and discussion techniques are used to deepen student understanding rather than to serve as a quiz or to require the regurgitation of information. Questioning and discussion techniques should invite students to build inquiry, make connections, and challenge their thinking. It is also essential that strategies accompany excellent questions to ensure that discussions involve thoughts and voices from all students. Students should be taught and encouraged to formulate high-level questions of their own, and one should ensure that all student voices have been heard in discussions.[16]

[15] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 29.

[16] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 29.

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 3B will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

Table 19. Evaluation of component 3B

3B: Questioning and discussion techniques				
Curriculum includes a variety of questions or prompts to challenge students cognitively, requiring more than single correct responses.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes questions that promote student understanding and metacognition.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes strategies that encourage students to formulate many questions, initiate topics, and make unsolicited contributions.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes strategies and structures to ensure that all students are thinking and responding to questions, that all students are involved, and that all voices are heard.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides strategies to promote genuine discussion among students without constant teacher mediation.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides strategies that encourage students themselves to ensure that all voices are heard in discussions and to invite comments from their classmates.	1	2	3	4

Domain 3C Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 3C (Engaging students in learning), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: activities and assignments, grouping of students, instructional materials and resources, and structure and pacing.[17] Students should be engaged in learning, not simply compliant, busy, or on task. In engaging learning environments, students are developing their understanding through intentional

[17] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 31.

curriculum design. To aid in student engagement, lessons should have an apparent structure with a beginning, middle, and end. Lessons should include learning tasks that require cognitive challenge and a time of closure for students to reflect on their learning and consolidate their understanding.[18]

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 3C will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

Table 20. Evaluation of component 3C

3C: Engaging students in learning				
Curriculum displays excellent alignment between student understanding built from learning tasks and the instructional outcomes.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum is designed to challenge student thinking and promote high levels of intellectual engagement and interest.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides an appropriate pace for each lesson with appropriate amounts of time for each activity in a manner that allows for true intellectual engagement.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes time for students to reflect on their learning and consolidate their understanding at the end of each lesson.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides some student choice and opportunities for students to help each other.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides opportunities for students to initiate inquiry and contribute to the exploration of content.	1	2	3	4

[18] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 31.

Domain 3D Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 3D (Using assessment in instruction), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: assessment criteria, monitoring of student learning, feedback to students, and student self-assessment and monitoring of progress.[19] Assessment is no longer simply the result of the end of instruction, but it is now an essential component of instruction. Students are now assessed during instruction for the purposes of "keeping the pulse" of student understanding in order to give feedback, guide instruction, and inform the direction of group discussion appropriately. It is essential for teachers to watch what students are writing and listen carefully to what they are saying and asking in order to determine if additional activities and discussions are necessary for student understanding. Curriculum should provide questions and tasks that allow teachers to monitor student learning and gauge the level of individual student understanding. Students should be exposed to the process of self-assessment and monitoring their own progress toward the established learning outcomes.[20]

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 3D will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

Table 21. Evaluation of component 3D

3D: Using assessment in instruction				
Curriculum includes questions, prompts, and assessments to aid teachers in diagnosing student learning.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides clear assessment criteria and opportunities for students to self-assess learning and monitor progress.	1	2	3	4

[19] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 33.

[20] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 33.

Table 21 continued

3D: Using assessment in instruction				
Curriculum provides opportunities for students to contribute to the formation of the assessment criteria.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides teachers guidance in utilizing assessment results to provide accurate feedback and necessary modifications to advance learning.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides opportunities for students to assess each other and offer feedback to peers that advances learning.	1	2	3	4

Domain 3E Evaluative Criteria

Utilizing component 3E (Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness), curriculum will be evaluated based on the following elements: lesson adjustment suggestions, response to students, and persistence.[21] While flexibility and responsiveness are largely dependent upon a teacher's experience, skill, and knowledge of teaching, it can be greatly enhanced by a curriculum that provides potential areas for misconceptions and learning difficulty along with suggested discussion topics, resources, and strategies for addressing such pitfalls.[22]

Based upon these characteristics, along with the suggested criterion, Accomplished and Exemplary critical attributes, possible examples, and areas of weakness discovered in the research, the following components are suggested for the curriculum evaluation tool. These components of 3E will be added to the complete evaluation tool for all of Domain 1 and Domain 3 in appendix 2.

[21] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 35.

[22] Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," 35.

Table 22. Evaluation of component 3E

3E: Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness				
Curriculum includes predetermined areas for potential misconceptions or confusion and offers teachers guidance for potential adjustments.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum offers extensive strategies and resources to accommodate student needs, interests, and misconceptions.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum offers extensive strategies and resources for students who have difficulty learning.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum conveys that a lesson should not be complete until all students have gained understanding and offers suggestions for students who fail to build understanding.	1	2	3	4

Final Evaluation Tool for Curriculum Purchasing

Utilizing each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3, the established criteria for evaluating and purchasing curricula were combined into one easy to use checklist, found in appendix 2. This final evaluation tool can provide key information about the instructional effectiveness of curricula for purchasing new curricula or evaluating existing curricula to make improvements. While there is a total score for each component and for each domain, the value of this tool lies in the process and the information from each question and section more so than the specific scores.

Curriculum Evaluation Tool Summary

This curriculum evaluation tool is specifically designed to evaluate the instructional effectiveness of curricula based on Domain 1 and 3 of the FFT. While this research focuses specifically on church curriculum, this tool could be utilized for churches, Christian or non-Christian schools, or individuals for purposes such as homeschooling. This does not include all aspects of curriculum evaluation but focuses solely on the potential for instructional effectiveness based on the curriculum design. For church or Christian school use, a section on hermeneutic principles ensuring appropriate

biblical theology and application could be added to assess the theological accuracy of curriculum.

While the overall scores of each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3 as well as an overall score for Domain 1 and Domain 3 can be recorded, these final scores will not necessarily indicate which curriculum is best for purchasing. These overall scores will provide an overview of a curricula's potential for instructional effectiveness; however, each individual component's value to the institution and the ease of potential additions and modifications should be considered as well. While looking at individual component scores and Domain 1 and Domain 3 totals can be beneficial for purchasing curriculum, looking at the results of specific criteria for each component will be more beneficial for making adjustments to curricula that have already been purchased.

Supplemental Tool for Curriculum Adaptation

According to the research results, based on an evaluation of five of the most widely used curricula for teen small group instruction in evangelical churches, curricula was proven to be Ineffective in five components and Developing in the other six components of Domain 1 and Domain 3 of the FFT. Based on these results, simply providing churches, schools, or individuals an evaluative tool to aid in the selection of curricula may likely result in acknowledging a lack of highly effective curriculum eligible for purchasing. In preparation for this potential, or the likelihood that churches, schools, or individuals may already have curriculum in use with instructional deficiencies, a supplemental tool will be created for improving the instructional effectiveness of existing curriculum.

This supplemental tool will be organized by each component of Domain 1 and Domain 3, and suggestions will be provided for potential planning or necessary additions or modifications in order to increase the instructional effectiveness of the curriculum in that particular component. By coupling the evaluation tool with this supplemental tool,

curriculum purchasers or users will know which components are weak and how to address the deficiencies in those specific components. The supplemental tool will offer necessary adaptations in order to increase the instructional effectiveness of curricula, including planning advice, additional strategies or structures, modifications, and potential resources. Suggestions will be made for the planning and modification phase of each individual component of Domain 1 and Domain 3.

Domain 1A Supplemental Suggestions

Component 1A (Knowledge of content and pedagogy) scored an average of Developing in the research, so some deficiencies can be expected in existing curricula. This component includes a knowledge of the relationships within the content, an understanding of prerequisite knowledge and skills that must be present for new learning, potential areas for misconceptions, and the best strategies for teaching the specific content. If curricula score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool, then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.
- Decide how this content relates to previous learning.
- Decide the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are necessary for students to understand this material.
- Review the learning tasks, prompts, and activities for their potential to engage students intellectually and relate to student interests and needs.
- Locate potential areas for student misconception or misunderstanding.

Modifications and Additions

- Provide a brief statement, question, or task that allows students to bridge the new content to previous learning or assumed age-appropriate understanding.

- If it is suspected that some students may not have the necessary prerequisite knowledge or skills essential for understanding the new content, then provide a brief summary of information or necessary accommodations.
- Provide adaptations to learning tasks, prompts, or student activities if necessary to increase intellectual challenge and apply to student interest, real world application, and individual student needs.
- Prepare resources, additional questions, or dialogue to address the areas of concern for potential misconceptions.

Domain 1B Supplemental Suggestions

Component 1B (Demonstrating knowledge of students) scored an average of Developing in the research, so some deficiencies can be expected in existing curricula. This component includes a knowledge of individual students, including their cognitive levels, language proficiency, interests, cultural background and experiences, and special needs. Curriculum should also provide the instructional tools necessary for addressing individual student needs and backgrounds, allowing for active intellectual engagement with the content. If curricula score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool, then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.
- Review each section or activity in the lesson for required intellectual engagement from all students.
- Become familiar with the cognitive levels and individual special needs of each individual student.
- Review the lesson and each section within the lesson for applicability to student interest.
- Consider each activity within the lesson in terms of how “low,” “middle,” and “high” students may perceive the content and form understanding.
- Consider each component of the lesson from the lens of student experiences, backgrounds, and culture, including their potential connections, variety of perceptions, etc.

Modifications and Additions

- Insert opportunities in each activity of the lesson to provide and ensure intellectual engagement from all students. To ensure intellectual engagement, students must be required to make their thinking visible through speaking or writing as they process and build an understanding of the content. Partner discussion, small group discussion, write-around activities, or other strategies may be inserted to ensure every student is held accountable for participation and visible thinking.

- For students who may have cognitive deficits or other special needs, consider modifications or accommodations as needed, such as a partner to read with, modified text, scaffolded steps for assignments, reduced or simplified tasks and questions, etc.

- If certain aspects of the lesson do not apply to student interest, consider revising the activity, omitting if applicable, or incorporating real-world connections through additional discussion, images, questions, or tasks.

- Activities and questions should have a low floor or entry level for "low" students and a high ceiling or potential for deep cognitive understanding and connections for "high" students. If not, then adjust tasks and questions where necessary to allow for this. Also, implement scaffolded questions and prompts if necessary for students who may struggle to understand.

- Include opportunities for students to apply and make connections to new content based on their experiences, backgrounds, and culture. Help students to understand how these experiences, backgrounds, and their culture form their perspectives for learning and that everyone brings different but valuable perspectives to the learning experience.

Domain 1C Supplemental Suggestions

Component 1C (Setting instructional outcomes) scored an average of Ineffective in the research, so major deficiencies can be expected in existing curricula. This component includes establishing learning outcomes for the unit and individual lessons that direct the purpose of every task and activity. Learning outcomes should reflect the most important learning in the content, guide the selection of tasks and resources, reflect a variety of types and levels of learning, and provide opportunities for students to connect their learning to previous and future learning as well as real-world experiences and concerns. If curricula score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool, then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.
- Locate the learning outcomes for the lesson. These may be explicitly stated or may need to be created. Evaluate learning outcomes based on the following: (1) Are they written in the form of what students will learn, not do? (2) Are they reflective of rigorous, age-appropriate learning? (3) Can they be measured through assessment? (4) Are they reflective of different levels of learning, including deep learning and application? (5) Are they coordinated with previous and future learning?
- Consider the individual needs of students in light of the learning outcomes. Will they need to be modified or scaffolded for some students?

Modifications and Additions

- Provide clear, rigorous, and age-appropriate learning outcomes for the lesson in the form of what students will learn, not do. This may have to be created or modified from the original curriculum design.
- Ensure that the new learning outcomes can be measured by an assessment, reflect deep learning and application, and are coordinated with previous and future learning.
- Create an activity, discussion, or question that will introduce the learning outcomes to students. One effective way to introduce the learning outcomes to students is to put it in the form of a compelling question that will guide the learning. Students should be able to answer this question by the end of the lesson or unit to show mastery of the learning outcome. Students must be aware of and interested in the learning outcomes.
- Ensure that the learning outcomes are revisited throughout the lesson, especially at the end of the lesson.

Domain 1D Supplemental Suggestions

Component 1D (Demonstrating knowledge of resources) scored an average of Developing in the research, so some deficiencies can be expected in existing curricula. This component includes a vast array of developmentally appropriate resources for class use, for teachers' personal growth and deepened understanding outside of class time, and for students' personal growth outside of class time. Resources should be utilized and modified for the intended activities and the appropriate level of challenge for students. If curricula score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool, then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.
- Locate any resources utilized for the class-time instruction as well as suggested resources for teachers or students for extra support.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of resources used in class instruction based on the following: (1) Are resources appropriate to the learning outcomes? (2) Are resources too challenging/too simplistic for students' age and/or cognitive abilities? (3) Do resources require too much/too little time for student engagement? (4) Do resources have appropriate lexile/reading level, or do they need to be modified? (5) Could resources be added or removed for more effectiveness in reaching the learning outcomes? (6) Are there suggestions for modifying resources or making accommodations for specific student needs?

Modifications and Additions

- After collecting a list of suggested resources for in-class instruction and personal out-of-class learning for teachers and students, consider other resources to incorporate if necessary. This may be based on personal knowledge of resources, asking others in the field for additional resources, or an internet search of potential resources based on the leaning outcomes.
- If in-class resources are too challenging or simplistic, then consider modifying, summarizing, or replacing them.
- If in-class resources are too time-consuming or lengthy, then consider selecting only specific parts for student engagement.
- If in-class resources do not provide for deep learning or cognitive challenge, then consider supplementing or replacing with additional resources.
- If resources include reading levels that are too challenging, then consider pre-teaching some vocabulary terms, scaffolding, summarizing, or modifying. This can be done for the whole class or for the needs of small groups or individual students.

Domain 1E Supplemental Suggestions

Component 1E (Designing coherent instruction) scored an average of Developing in the research, so some deficiencies can be expected in existing curricula. This component includes the coordination of learning outcomes, knowledge of content, knowledge of students, and knowledge of resources in order to design an effective series of learning activities. Learning activities should ensure active intellectual engagement and reflect an attempt to meet the needs of individual and groups of students. If curricula

score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool, then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.
- Review the lesson looking for high levels of cognitive engagement throughout.
- Review the lesson for possible strategies or structures, ensuring that all students are intellectually engaged and required to produce some form of visible learning with each activity.
- Locate any opportunities for student choice or potential areas to incorporate student choice.
- Locate any opportunities for differentiation or suggested grouping patters or potential areas to incorporate these.
- Locate any resources for differentiation within the lesson or curriculum guide.
- Assess the lesson to see if there is a clear structure: beginning, middle, and end.
- Assess the lesson for appropriate time allocations for each activity.

Modifications and Additions

- If activities are not aligned with instructional outcomes, then make modifications to activities as necessary. This may include altering resources or materials, questions, or activities in general.
- Ensure an appropriate alignment and sequencing among activities, including a clear beginning, middle, and end of the lesson.
- Adjust activities to ensure appropriate time allocations. Make sure to leave plenty of time for intellectual engagement among all students during each activity, which may lengthen time allocations from the original suggestions. If so, then some activities may need to be omitted or shortened.
- Make plans for instructional groupings by including the use of small groups, partners, or large group conversation as appropriate. Also consider students' individual needs and cognitive abilities when making small groups and pairs.
- If there is no student choice in activities, questions, or assessments, then add student choice where possible.
- If activities are boring or not well aligned to instructional outcomes, then make necessary changes to include student interest and alignment to learning outcomes.

- Ensure that each activity includes a strategy or learning structure that requires visible learning from all students. This includes student dialogue or written expression for each task or set of questions, requiring each student to participate in some way.

- If no strategies or accommodations are provided for differentiation, then consider the individual needs of students and differentiate resources, questions, and activities as necessary to meet each learner's needs.

Domain 1F Supplemental Suggestions

Component 1F (Designing student assessments) scored an average of Ineffective in the research, so major deficiencies can be expected in existing curricula. This component includes a variety of formative and summative student assessments to modify instruction as needed and ensure students have met the desired learning outcomes. If curricula score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool, then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.

- Locate any formative assessment (assessment during instruction for teacher guidance on obtaining the level of student understanding) throughout the lesson.

- Locate the summative assessment (end of lesson or end of unit assessment of student learning toward the learning outcomes) for the unit and potentially for the lesson.

- After evaluating the lesson for formative assessment, reflect on the following questions: (1) Does it fully align with the learning outcomes? (2) Is formative assessment included for measuring all learning outcomes? (3) Are there potential modifications to the assessment based on student needs? (4) Does the curriculum provide potential suggestions for instruction, questioning, or discussion if students do poorly on the formative assessment?

- After evaluating the summative assessment within the unit or lesson, reflect on the following questions: (1) Does it fully align with the learning outcomes? (2) Does it measure all learning outcomes? (3) Are there potential modifications to the assessment based on student needs? (4) Does the curriculum provide potential suggestions for an extension of learning, including extra instruction, questioning, or discussion if students do poorly on the summative lesson or unit assessment? (5) Are students involved in the development of the summative assessment criteria? (6) Are students involved in the development of rubrics for the summative assessment?

Modifications and Additions

- If formative assessment is lacking or weak, then insert opportunities to gauge student understanding toward the learning outcomes throughout the lesson. Ensure that it fully aligns with learning outcomes and measures each one effectively.
- Consider possible instructional strategies, questions, or materials if students indicate misconceptions or a lack of understanding based on the formative assessment results.
- If summative assessment for the unit or lesson is lacking or weak, then insert an opportunity at the end of each lesson and unit to gauge student understanding toward the learning outcomes. Ensure that it fully aligns with learning outcomes and measures each one effectively.
- Consider possible instructional strategies, questions, or materials if students indicate misconceptions or a lack of understanding based on the summative assessment results.
- Incorporate an opportunity at the beginning of the unit for students to aid in the creation of the final summative assessment. If appropriate, allow students to participate in the development of the summative assessment for the individual lesson as well.
- Based on the summative assessment and learning outcomes, allow students to participate in the development of a rubric for the summative assessment. This should include an understanding of the learning outcomes written in student friendly language.
- Provide potential modifications or accommodations for assessments based on individual student needs as appropriate.
- Ensure that the formative and/or summative assessment is also linked to student interest and real-world application.

Domain 3A Supplemental Suggestions

Component 3A (Communicating with students) scored an average of Developing in the research, so some deficiencies can be expected in existing curricula. This component includes a presentation to students that is clear and accurate, including the introduction of the learning outcomes and directions for activities. The presentation of content and tasks should be linked to students' previous knowledge and interest along with the necessary time and space for students to intellectually engage and extend their learning. If curricula score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool,

then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.
- Evaluate the clarity and effectiveness of the instructional purpose of the lesson. Also evaluate how this purpose is communicated to students.
- Evaluate the relationship between the instructional purpose and student interest.
- Evaluate the clarity and accuracy of directions for activities along with guidance for potential misconceptions.
- Evaluate the lesson for clear explanations of content, potential for students' conceptual understanding, and the appropriate amount of productive struggle among students, meaning a balance of challenge with the necessary scaffolding and support.
- Locate any strategies included to ensure that students engage each other in dialogue and extend concepts with each other or opportunities to include such strategies.
- Evaluate the lesson for clear, correct, and age-appropriate uses of vocabulary as well as vocabulary terms and explanations to increase students' vocabulary and understanding of important concepts.

Modifications and Additions

- Ensure the effectiveness and clarity of the instructional purpose of the lesson and the connection to student interest. Adjust if necessary.
- Ensure clarity in the dialogue between teacher and students as the teacher relays the instructional purpose of the lesson to students. If this is not included or presented in a clear manner, then adjust as necessary. Make sure that students understand the purpose of the lesson and that it relates to their interests.
- Clarify any directions for activities that may seem confusing to students and create a plan for potential misconceptions.
- Ensure that explanations of content are clear and relate to student interest. Allow for some productive struggle among students where the content is scaffolded in a way that is not too easy and requires intellectual engagement but is also not too difficult, which may lead to disengagement.
- Implement strategies to ensure that students engage each other in dialogue and extend concepts with each other. This may be done through the use of partner or small group discussions. It can also be accomplished through the use of sentence starters within the small group or partner discussions, such as "I am wondering . . . ," "I would add that . . . ," "I agree/disagree because . . . ," "Have we also considered . . . ," etc.

- Ensure that appropriate grammar, syntax, and correct vocabulary are used when communicating with students so that information is accurate and well understood.

- If vocabulary is not appropriate to students' age, previous knowledge, or cognitive abilities, then either modify the vocabulary by increasing or decreasing complexity as needed or provide strategies to pre-teach the difficult vocabulary before it appears in the lesson. While too many new vocabulary terms will make student understanding unlikely, an appropriate amount of new vocabulary terms are essential to growing students' understanding. Promote a good blend of new vocabulary terms with support for students to understand these terms in conversation.

Domain 3B Supplemental Suggestions

Component 3B (Questioning and discussion techniques) scored an average of Ineffective in the research, so major deficiencies can be expected in existing curricula. This component includes the utilization of questions and discussion techniques to deepen understanding, invite inquiry, and challenge thinking. Questioning and discussion techniques should also promote participation among all students, with students ensuring that each voice has been heard. If curricula score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool, then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.

- Review the lesson for the following aspects of questioning: (1) Are there a variety of questions, including many that promote cognitive challenge? (2) Do questions require more than a single correct answer? (3) Is there ample time and space for students to think before expecting an answer to questions? (4) Are questions used for promoting student understanding and metacognition as a form of instruction? (5) Are students encouraged to formulate questions and initiate topics?

- Review the lesson for the following aspects of discussion: (1) Are strategies or structures included that ensure every student is thinking and responding to questions? (2) Are strategies included that promote genuine discussion among students as opposed to constant teacher mediation? (3) Are there strategies included to aid students in holding other students accountable for participating in the discussion and inviting comments from others?

Modifications and Additions

- Ensure a variety of questions, adding questions that promote deep learning, and include cognitive challenge.

- Ensure that questions require more than a single correct answer. If necessary, modify existing questions or include additional questions that incorporate this level of challenge and deep thought.

- Be sure to include think time, pausing after asking a high-level question so that students have an appropriate amount of time to formulate or record their thoughts before being asked to respond out loud.

- If questions are only used after a lecture or dissemination of content, then build in questions that can be used to promote learning instead of simply evaluating it. Add questions that will lead students in the discovery of content, the building of understanding, and the promotion of metacognition. This may include altering activities to focus more on students completing tasks and answering questions in order to build their own learning and understanding instead of the teacher's "telling" information.

- Implement opportunities throughout the lesson for students to ask questions and initiate topics. This can be done in the beginning, middle, and end of the lesson. One way to increase the likelihood of students doing this on their own is the frequent and consistent use of asking students to complete the sentence starter "I'm wondering . . . ." As students become more familiar with this process, they will get better at inquiry and asking questions to gain understanding.

- Include strategies or structures that ensure every student is thinking and responding to questions. This could easily be implemented using partner discussion. It could also include the use of Kagan structures for small group discussion. There are numerous Kagan structures that can be added to questions and discussions to hold all students accountable for participating.[23] Another way to increase the likelihood of all students participating in the small group setting is by using a group leader. The leader is responsible for ensuring that all students in the group have responded before finally adding their own thoughts and potentially creating a consolidated group response that can be shared with the whole group. The leader role can change among different students daily, weekly, etc. so that all students eventually have a chance to be the small group leader. The responsibilities of the leader would need to be taught to the whole group and students will need reminders often of the leader expectations.

- Include strategies that promote genuine discussion among students as opposed to constant teacher mediation. Once again, this would require the use of partner and small group discussions, Kagan structures, and/or the group leader role. This also includes ensuring that questions are well written and can promote good conversation because of their depth and openness.

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[23] Kagan Publishing and Professional Development, accessed June 1, 2021, https://www.kagan online.com/about_us.php. Kagan provides training for educators and publishes many books that describe a large variety of instructional structures.

- Include strategies to aid students in holding other students accountable for participating in the discussion and inviting comments from others. This can effectively be done by adding group leaders and rotating this role among different group members. Teach students the responsibilities of the leader, including ensuring that all members of the group have responded, encouraging the elaboration of ideas when necessary, inviting quiet group members to share, etc.

Domain 3C Supplemental Suggestions

Component 3C (Engaging students in learning) scored an average of Developing in the research, so some deficiencies can be expected in existing curricula. This component includes strategies to promote students' intellectual engagement as opposed to compliance and passivity. This includes appropriate pace and time allowance for students to build understanding and eventually reflect on their learning and consolidate their understanding by the end of the lesson. If curricula score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool, then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.
- Review tasks and activities in light of the learning outcomes. (1) Do tasks align to the learning outcomes? (2) Do they cover all aspects of the learning outcomes? (3) Do they require students to build understanding toward the learning outcomes?
- Evaluate the tasks and activities for student interest, engagement, and the requirement of high intellectual challenge.
- Evaluate each task and activity for the amount of time prescribed. (1) Based on the amount of time available for instruction, are there activities that will need to be added, deleted, or modified? (2) Does the amount of suggested time for each activity provide ample time for students to intellectually engage, respond, and discuss?
- Evaluate the end of the lesson for an opportunity for students to reflect on their learning and consolidate their understanding. (1) Is this opportunity provided? (2) Does it align with the learning outcomes?
- Evaluate the lesson for opportunities for student choice and for students to help each other. If absent, then locate potential areas to implement these components.
- Evaluate the lesson for opportunities for students to initiate inquiry or explore content. If these do not exist, then locate potential areas to implement these components.

Modifications and Additions

- Ensure that learning tasks and activities align to the learning outcomes. If not, then alter resources, questions, prompts, or tasks accordingly so that students can achieve the learning outcomes by participating in the activities to build understanding.

- Ensure that learning tasks and activities address all aspects of the learning outcomes. If not, then adjust accordingly by deleting, modifying, or adding tasks. Activities should require students to build understanding toward the learning outcomes. Ensure that students are required to intellectually engage with content in a way that they build the understanding required to master the learning outcomes. If the curriculum relies heavily on teacher explanation and delivery of content, then consider implementing new tasks or questions designed to provide students the opportunity to build their own understanding. There should be more student thinking and student talk than teacher talk.

- Ensure that tasks and activities relate to student interest, promote engagement, and require high intellectual challenge. This may require deleting, modifying, or adding activities or tasks.

- If the amount of suggested time for each activity does not provide ample time for students to intellectually engage, respond, and discuss, then consider adding more time or modifying the activity in order to offer students the time to engage. Based on the amount of time available for instruction, consider adding, deleting, or modifying activities so the lesson can be finalized by the end of class. Keep in mind that students should not be passive or compliant but actively engaged through visible thinking, such as writing and discussing.

- Ensure that the end of the lesson provides students an opportunity to reflect on their learning and consolidate their understanding. This final activity should align with the learning outcomes, essentially offering students a chance to combine their understanding from throughout the lesson in order to show mastery of the learning outcomes. All students should be asked to write or discuss a final task or question to ensure that all students have consolidated their understanding and reached mastery of the learning outcomes.

- If the lesson does not include student choice, then try to add opportunities for students to have choice in their tasks. This could be done by offering a selection of resources to evaluate or by allowing students to respond to tasks or questions by writing, recording, illustrating, etc. Also provide opportunities throughout the lesson for students to help each other. This would be done through partner and small group work as students complete tasks or questions together.

- If the lesson does not provide opportunities for students to initiate inquiry or explore content, then attempt to add this component. This can be accomplished by requiring students to list an "I'm wondering . . ." question or a set of questions at the beginning of the lesson about the given topic or learning outcomes. One effective strategy for this is called the Question Formulation Technique (QFT).[24] In short, the QFT helps students learn to ask good questions and increase learning through inquiry. Students are given a picture, quote, video clip, paragraph, etc. and asked to list as many questions as they can. Students are encouraged to ask open-ended instead of closed-end questions. Next, they can share their questions with a small group or partner. If appropriate to the lesson, small groups or partners can then select their top question or top few questions. This builds student inquiry, ability to ask good questions, and interest in the content. These student questions can become a driving question board that is utilized throughout the lesson or unit to guide learning.

Domain 3D Supplemental Suggestions

Component 3D (Using assessment in instruction) scored an average of Ineffective in the research, so major deficiencies can be expected in existing curricula. This component includes the utilization of formative assessment to gauge student learning and make necessary adjustments as needed. It also includes student self-assessment toward meeting the learning outcomes and monitoring their own progress and that of peers to further learning. If curricula score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool, then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.
- Evaluate the lesson for the use of questions, prompts, and assessments that can aid teachers in diagnosing student learning. Based on the lesson as it is written, would the teacher know if all students were learning and achieving the learning outcomes?
- Evaluate the lesson for opportunities for students to self-assess and evaluate their own progress toward achieving the learning outcomes.
- Evaluate the lesson for opportunities for students to contribute to the formation of assessment criteria.

[24] Right Question Institute, "What Is the QFT?," accessed January 31, 2022, https://rightquestion.org/what-is-the-qft/.

- Evaluate the lesson for teacher guidance on utilizing assessment results to provide student feedback and modify lessons accordingly. Are teachers given necessary guidance to utilize assessment results in moving learning forward for all students?

- Evaluate the curriculum for opportunities for students to assess each other and offer feedback to peers that advances learning. If these opportunities are not explicitly built into the curriculum, then locate potential areas to implement peer assessment and feedback.

Modifications and Additions

- Ensure that questions, prompts, and assessments are included in each lesson to help teachers diagnose student learning. Implement necessary questions or assessment pieces throughout the lesson to ensure that students are gaining understanding toward the learning outcomes. For each activity, prompt, or set of questions, consider the following: What do I want students to understand based on this activity so they can build understanding toward the learning outcomes? Write questions and prompts to help them achieve your answer to this question.

- Implement opportunities for students to self-assess and evaluate their own progress toward achieving the learning outcomes throughout the lesson. If students are made aware of the learning outcomes at the beginning of the lesson, then questions and tasks can be added throughout the lesson where they are required to gauge their ability to understand the learning outcome in light of new content and learning.

- Build in opportunities for students to contribute to the formation of the assessment criteria. This would most effectively be done at the beginning of the lesson. For example, introduce the learning outcome either using a statement or in the form of a question. Have students think about and list questions about the learning outcomes. These questions become a driving question board for students' inquiry into building an understanding of the learning outcomes. Essentially, these student questions can be categorized and filtered in a way that they become part of the assessment criteria. At the end of the lesson, students will include answers to their own questions in order to show mastery of the learning outcomes.

- Consider utilizing assessment results to provide student feedback and modify lessons accordingly. Look over questions and assessments included in the lesson, and predict possible misconceptions or areas for difficulty. Based on this prediction, prepare feedback to students and potential examples, modifications, or additions to the lesson to address these concerns.

- Insert opportunities for students to assess each other and offer feedback to peers that advances learning through the use of partner or small group work. Design the essential questions or tasks that would require students to offer feedback to each other that improves their thinking and moves students toward better understanding of the learning outcomes.

Domain 3E Supplemental Suggestions

Component 3E (Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness) scored an average of Ineffective in the research, so major deficiencies can be expected in existing

curricula. This component includes anticipating potential areas for misconceptions or misunderstanding as well as suggested resources, strategies, and discussion topics for addressing the misconceptions. If curricula score below Accomplished in this area based on the evaluation tool, then the following suggestions may prove beneficial in improving instructional effectiveness.

Planning Phase

- Become familiar with the overall learning outcomes of the unit and individual lesson, even if they are not specifically stated or clear.
- Read through the lesson identifying potential areas for student confusion or misconceptions. These may or may not be identified in the curriculum.
- For areas of potential confusion or misconceptions, identify necessary adjustments or guidance to offer clarity in the form of additional resources, questions, examples, or explanations. These may or may not be identified in the curriculum.
- Locate strategies and resources in the curriculum for students with special needs, difficulty learning, special interests, or misconceptions.

Modifications and Additions

- If potential areas for student confusion or misconceptions are not identified in the curriculum, then locate these areas. For areas of potential confusion or misconceptions, identify necessary adjustments or guidance to offer clarity. If these are not supplied in the curriculum, then plan for difficult areas by adding the necessary resources, questions, examples, or explanations in case problems arise.
- If strategies and resources are present in the curriculum for students with special needs, difficulty learning, special interests, or misconceptions, then be familiar with these and plan for implementation if applicable. If they are not present, then identify these based on the students in the class. Prepare potential resources and strategies for these concerns.
- Ensure that lessons are not considered over or complete until students have gained an understanding of the learning outcomes. Prepare for this potential by having additional resources, questions, or discussion topics to clarify misunderstanding. Also prepare for the potential of adding a lesson for the following class meeting if necessary to address the misconceptions or lack of understanding.

Suggested Use for Supplemental Tool in Schools or Churches

After utilizing the curriculum evaluation tool, a school or church will know the level of the curricula's instructional effectiveness without teacher intervention or additional strategies. This information can be utilized to follow the supplemental tool for increasing instructional effectiveness. The supplemental tool can be utilized as a whole or simply according to the components that are weaker according to the evaluation tool. While the supplemental tool offers teachers assistance in implementing instructionally deficient curriculum or components of curriculum, it may not be as effective without proper training for teachers.

For the highest impact, the supplemental tool could be utilized in a training offered for teachers. After a school or church has utilized the evaluation tool, the areas of instructional weakness will be identified. With this knowledge, teachers could be trained to utilize the supplemental tool, specifically focusing on areas proven deficient by the evaluation tool. There are several areas of instruction that are difficult for trained teachers to implement effectively, such as designing high interest and rigorous learning outcomes, aligning all tasks and activities to the learning outcomes, designing effective questions that allow for high levels of intellectual engagement, requiring visible thinking to ensure all students are actively engaged, training students to build inquiry and learning skills by asking questions and initiating topics, and ensuring that lessons are not complete until all students have consolidated their understanding and shown mastery of the learning outcomes. Even with the supplemental tool, some of these aspects will be difficult for teachers or volunteers. These areas would be excellent topics for teacher training and professional learning.

Inquiry Design Method for Christian Education

A faith-based Inquiry Design Model (IDM) was recommended in chapter 5 to address the instructional deficiencies found in current curriculum design. I will refer to

this model as the Inquiry Design Method for Christian Education (IDMCE). The original version of IDM was designed by Kathy Swan, John Lee, and S. G. Grant specifically for Social Studies.[25] IDMCE utilizes the work of Swan, Lee, and Grant with some modifications and specific changes for Christian education. The term "Christian education"—as opposed to "educational ministry"—was selected because this method for curriculum design could be implemented for all aspects of Christian education, including educational ministry, Christian schools, or any aspect of instruction in the realm of Christian education.

IDMCE addresses many of the components of effective instruction identified in the curriculum evaluation tool and suggested in the supplemental tool. By following the IDMCE structure for unit and lesson design, individuals or curriculum designers can increase the likelihood for effective instruction whether implemented by trained or untrained teachers. IDMCE specifically boosts effectiveness by focusing on learning outcomes; increasing student assessment and alignment to learning outcomes; increasing the alignment, student participation, and intellectual rigor of questioning, discussion, and learning tasks; and promoting teacher flexibility and responsiveness—all of which were identified as areas of weakness in the research.

The strong correlation between IDMCE and instructional effectiveness according to the FFT, the evaluative tool, and the supplemental tool can be confirmed and demonstrated by examining each essential component of IDMCE in light of the suggested criterion for instructional effectiveness. The components of IDMCE include the establishment of the compelling question, the QFT strategy and an entry event,

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[25] Kathy Swan, John Lee, and S. G. Grant, *Inquiry Design Model: Building Inquiries in Social Studies* (USA: National Council for the Social Studies, 2018). This was the authors' second book discussing the use of the Inquiry Design Model. They have two more books on IDM: S. G. Grant, Kathy Swan, and John Lee, *Inquiry-Based Practice in Social Studies Education: Understanding the Inquiry Design Model* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Kathy Swan, S. G. Grant, and John Lee, *Blueprinting an Inquiry-Based Curriculum: Planning with the Inquiry Design Model* (USA: National Council for the Social Studies, 2019).

supporting questions, assessments, sources, and tasks. Each component of IDMCE will be discussed and proven beneficial for instructional effectiveness based on the suggested criterion in the FFT and the supplemental tool.

Compelling Question

IDMCE begins by utilizing the learning outcomes for the unit to create an all-encompassing, student-friendly, high-interest, and intellectually rigorous compelling question. This overarching compelling question serves as a learning outcome guide for the entire unit, typically comprised of approximately five lessons (though there could potentially be more or less). The rigorous and relevant compelling question is introduced in the first lesson and remains the focus of instruction throughout the unit in each of the following lessons. The compelling question also guides the supporting questions, the selection of sources, the selection of tasks, and all aspects of assessment. While the compelling question seems to be the simplest component of the IDMCE process, it is possibly the most difficult, as the specific phrasing of this question affects the entire scope of the unit. It is sometimes easier to design the supporting questions first and then write a compelling question that can effectively encompass each of the supporting questions in alignment with the targeted learning outcomes.

By utilizing IDMCE and the inclusion of a compelling question, many aspects discussed in the supplemental tool will be intentionally included in unit and lesson design. The compelling question will specifically address all four components of 1C, one component of 3A, and three components of 3B on the modifications and additions section of the supplemental tool.

Addressing component 1C, the addition of a compelling question in IDMCE provides clear and rigorous learning outcomes, ensures that new learning is linked to past and future learning that can be easily measured, introduces the learning outcomes to students in an interesting and engaging manner, and ensures that learning outcomes are

revisited throughout lessons. The compelling question addresses component 3A by ensuring that the instructional purpose of the lesson offers effectiveness, clarity, and connection to student interest. The compelling question also provides several essential elements of component 3B. This includes ensuring a variety of questions that promote cognitive challenge and deep learning, questions requiring more than a single correct answer, and questions utilized as tasks to promote and encourage learning as opposed to only evaluating learning.

Entry Event and QFT

In IDMCE, the compelling question will guide the planning of the entry event; however, the entry event will be presented to students first. The entry event introduces the compelling question and the unit topic to students. This presentation should appeal to the interests of students and pique their curiosity about the unit's content. This can be done with the use of pictures, quotes, video clips, personal stories, or other engaging "hooks." Through the entry event, students will know the general direction of the unit and the topic that will be studied. After the entry event, the compelling question will be introduced.

Utilizing the compelling question, the QFT strategy will be implemented to increase students' engagement with and curiosity about the compelling question and unit topic. The addition of the QFT is a modification to the original IDM process to increase student inquiry and engagement. Before the students are engaged in the QFT strategy, they may be given an opportunity to simply list what they already know about the topic. This engages students in thought about the topic, allows them to recall past knowledge or experiences, and provides teachers valuable information about the level of students' previous knowledge and experience to build upon during instruction. The list of existing knowledge created by each student can be shared with a partner, with a small group, with

the large group, or through a shared Google Doc for the teacher and all students to see and interact with.

Next, students will utilize the QFT strategy where they are given a few minutes to list as many questions as possible about the compelling question. Students will begin this process with about a minute of think time where they can consider the compelling question with no pressure to begin writing. Next, they will be asked to write down as many questions as they can possibly think of. These questions will reflect the content they would like to learn more about in order to effectively answer the compelling question. Next, students meet in small groups to share their list of questions, categorize them, and then reduce or modify the list to include their top three to five questions. After each group shares, the final list of questions becomes a driving question board that will aid in driving instruction toward answering the compelling question. This driving question board should be very similar to the supporting questions created in the unit design phase.

By participating in the QFT, students are engaging intellectually and exploring the unit content as they begin to think deeply about the topic, but they are also creating a driving question board that will align with the supporting questions and will later serve as summative assessment questions for each lesson and the unit as a while. This driving question board also sets the course for the following lessons, including the selection of sources, questions, and tasks. With a pre-planned unit reliant upon supporting questions that are written in advance, it is impossible to align completely with the student created driving question board; however, they should be very similar. When students create excellent questions not included in the pre-planned unit's supporting questions, teachers have the freedom to address these questions by adding their own sources and tasks to the original unit design.

If one utilizes IDMCE and includes an entry event and the QFT strategy, then many aspects discussed in the supplemental tool will be intentionally included in unit and

lesson design. The entry event and QFT strategy will specifically address two components of 1A, four components of 1B, one component of 1C, three components of 1E, two components of 1F, one component of 3A, three components of 3B, three components of 3C, and two components of 3D on the modifications and additions section of the supplemental tool.

The entry event and QFT strategy provide essential elements of Domain 1. First, it addresses component 1A by obtaining and addressing students' prerequisite knowledge and providing activities that offer intellectual challenge and connection to student interest. Component 1B is addressed by offering students opportunities for intellectual engagement and real-world application, offering activities with a "low floor" and "high ceiling" so all students can participate at their level, and offering opportunities for students to connect previous knowledge and learning to new content based on their experiences and backgrounds. Next, component 1C is addressed by including an activity that introduces the learning outcomes to students in an effective manner. The entry event and QFT strategy also help to accomplish the requirements of component 1E by ensuring alignment of learning outcomes to student interest, ensuring visible learning among all students, and offering differentiation to meet the needs of all students by providing the "low floor" and "high ceiling" entry activities. Component 1F is addressed by offering students an opportunity to aid in the creation of their final summative assessment and the development of a rubric for the final assessment. By creating a driving question board through the QFT strategy, students are providing the necessary components of the summative assessment and choosing questions they themselves must answer in order to successfully accomplish the learning outcomes, which is essentially creating their own rubric for answering the compelling question as a summative assessment.

The entry event and QFT strategy also provide essential elements of Domain 3. First, the entry event meets certain criteria of component 3A by ensuring clarity in the teachers' dialogue and explanation of the purpose for learning in connection to students'

interest. Component 3B is addressed by the QFT strategy as it includes time for students to think and process before being asked to respond, provides opportunities for students to ask questions and initiate topics, and includes a strategy to ensure that all students are thinking and responding to questions or tasks. The QFT strategy addresses component 3C by ensuring that learning tasks are aligned to learning outcomes and student interest, include high levels of intellectual challenge, and provide an opportunity for students to initiate inquiry and explore content. Lastly, the QFT strategy addresses component 3D by affording students an opportunity to self-assess and evaluate their own progress toward achieving the learning outcomes by creating a driving question board that will be revisited throughout the unit and providing students an opportunity to participate in the creation of the assessment criteria.

Supporting Questions

In the initial IDMCE lesson, the curriculum would introduce the compelling question through an entry event, provide time for students to develop the supporting questions through the QFT strategy and driving question board, and then introduce the pre-planned supporting questions for the unit. The entry event, presentation of the compelling question, the QFT and student-selected driving question board, and the supporting questions would provide students with the overall goal for learning throughout the unit and for each individual lesson within the unit, staying rigorously aligned to the curriculum developer's intended learning outcomes.

Supporting questions are the essential structural components that guide students in acquiring the necessary understanding to thoroughly answer the compelling question. If students can successfully answer each supporting question, then they will be able to combine their understanding from the supporting questions to successfully answer the compelling question. Supporting questions provide necessary structure to the unit by intentionally reinforcing the intended learning outcomes that are encompassed in the

compelling question. Each lesson within the unit will be guided by one of the supporting questions. Therefore, the compelling question and one supporting question guide the sources, questions, and tasks for each lesson, ensuring constant unit alignment to the learning outcomes.

If one utilizes IDMCE and includes supporting questions, then many aspects discussed in the supplemental tool will be intentionally included in unit and lesson designs. The supporting questions will specifically address one component of 1A, one component of 1B, all four components of 1C, two components of 3A, three components of 3B, four components of 3C, and one component of 3D on the modifications and additions section of the supplemental tool.

The supporting questions provide several essential elements of Domain 1. First, in addressing components 1A and 1B, supporting questions provide students the opportunity to bridge new learning to larger concepts and previous learning as well as provide a "low floor" and "high ceiling" for potential student understanding based on the needs and abilities of individual students. Supporting questions assist in maximizing instructional effectiveness by meeting all components of 1C, as they provide clear and rigorous learning outcomes, ensure that learning outcomes can be measured, effectively introduce students to the learning outcomes for the unit and lesson, and ensure that learning outcomes are continuously utilized throughout the unit and throughout each lesson.

The supporting questions also benefit curriculum design by meeting many essential components of Domain 3. Supporting questions meet several elements of 3A by ensuring a connection to students' interest, as they clearly convey the instructional purpose of each lesson to students. They also serve in meeting essential elements of 3B by ensuring a variety of questions that promote cognitive challenge and deep learning, the inclusion of questions requiring more than a single correct answer, and questions utilized as tasks to promote and encourage learning as opposed to only evaluating learning.

Component 3C is addressed by providing the necessary structure to ensure that learning activities and tasks are aligned to the learning outcomes, address all aspects of each learning outcome, connect to student interest, promote student engagement, and provide intellectual challenge. By introducing each lesson with a supporting question and wrapping up each lesson by having students answer the supporting question, curriculum designers ensure that students have an opportunity to reflect upon and consolidate their understanding toward the learning outcomes at the end of each lesson. In a similar manner, supporting questions address an essential element of component 3D by ensuring that questions and assessments are included in each lesson to help teachers diagnose student learning and understanding toward accomplishing the learning outcomes.

Assessments

The next step of the IDMCE planning process includes creating a final summative assessment, which can be as simple as asking the original compelling question and allowing students the opportunity to answer it through the means of their choosing, such as writing, designing posters or illustrations, videos, and presentations. The goal in an IDM unit is that students build understanding of each supporting question so that by the end of the unit they have a thorough understanding of the compelling question. The summative *unit* assessment measures this understanding, while a summative *lesson* assessment measures student understanding of each supporting question at the end of each lesson. In a similar fashion to the summative unit assessment, a lesson assessment can simply involve asking students to answer the supporting question by the means of their choosing. Therefore, in IDMCE unit planning, summative unit assessments and summative lesson assessments are very easy to design but offer crucial information for teachers in gauging student understanding of the learning outcomes.

Formative assessment is also built into the IDMCE planning process. Where summative assessments offer teachers important information about student understanding

at the end of a lesson or unit, formative assessments are used throughout lessons to gauge student understanding and identify potential misconceptions. This is done so that teachers can offer the necessary resources, questions, explanations, or discussions to offer clarity and understanding toward the learning objectives. By utilizing formative assessments, teachers ensure that students are gaining understanding throughout the lesson, and when difficulty is perceived, plans can be altered to ensure proper understanding. This allows students to uncover and address misconceptions and lack of understanding before the lesson is considered finished.

Formative assessment is built into the IDMCE process through the use of high-level questions and tasks requiring students to utilize sources, process and analyze information, and make connections and application. By requiring all students to participate in each question and task and making student thinking visible through written tasks or discussion with partners and in small groups, teachers can formatively assess student understanding throughout the lesson.

If one utilizes IDMCE and includes summative and formative assessments, then many aspects discussed in the supplemental tool will be intentionally included in unit and lesson designs. The formative and summative aspects of IDMCE will specifically address one component of 1C, one component of 1E, seven components of 1F, two components of 3C, five components of 3D, and one component of 3E on the modifications and additions section of the supplemental tool.

The formative and summative assessments provide several essential elements of Domain 1. First, they include important components of 1C and 1E by ensuring that learning outcomes are revisited throughout each lesson and by providing student choice by allowing students to choose the medium through which they answer the supporting questions and the compelling question at the end of lessons and units. Assessments utilized in IDMCE also meet most every element in component 1F, including well-aligned formative assessments that gauge student understanding throughout lessons,

potential modifications if misconceptions are identified, summative assessments at the end of each lesson and unit to gauge student understanding, opportunities for students to assist in the creation of summative assessments and accompanying rubrics, and assessments that are intentionally linked to student interest and real-world application.

The assessment aspects of IDMCE also benefit curriculum design by meeting several essential components of Domain 3. Elements of 3C enhanced by IDM assessments include an opportunity for students to reflect on their learning and consolidate their understanding at the end of each lesson and unit as well as offer student choice in how they prove this understanding. Addressing all components of 3D, assessments in IDMCE ensure that questions and assessments are included in each lesson to diagnose student learning, provide opportunities for students to self-assess and monitor their progress toward the learning outcomes, offer students an opportunity to contribute to the assessment criteria, utilize formative assessment results to provide student feedback and address any misconceptions, and increase opportunities for students to assess each other and provide feedback that advances learning. Lastly, IDMCE assessments address component 3E by ensuring that lessons are not considered complete until all students have built accurate understanding toward the learning outcomes.

Sources

The selection of sources is incredibly important in the IDMCE planning process. Sources must be applicable to student interest, aligned to the learning outcomes by supporting student understanding of the supporting and compelling question, and developmentally appropriate or modified accordingly. Sources must also be considered in light of the amount of time available for each activity and altered if necessary based on time constraints and points of emphasis. Sources should never be used alone; they should always be paired with tasks or questions that allow students the opportunity to process the information from the sources in order to do something with the information. Information

alone does not create understanding or transformation. Sources paired with tasks and questions move students' thinking toward the learning outcomes by providing them the opportunity to build the understanding necessary to answer the supporting and compelling questions.

In educational ministry, specifically small group discipleship or Sunday school, Scripture should be utilized as the main source for instruction; however, other sources may be added to assist students in understanding concepts. While biblical passages should not be modified, other sources may need to be summarized or modified in order to meet time constraints, provide the main point of the source, or to meet the students' developmental needs. Sources may be provided or suggested for in-class instruction as well as for teachers' and students' personal learning and growth outside of class. Additional sources should also be considered for students who may have specific interests or needs requiring extra support or challenge. Sources may need to be differentiated or altered for these purposes.

If one utilizes IDMCE and includes an extensive collection of well-suited and properly utilized sources, then many aspects discussed in the supplemental tool will be intentionally included in unit and lesson designs. The careful selection of sources in the IDM process will specifically address one component of 1A, one component of 1B, all five components of 1D, two components of 1E, two components of 1F, one component of 3A, two components of 3C, and all three components of 3E on the modifications and additions section of the supplemental tool.

The wide selection of appropriate sources provides several essential elements of Domain 1. First, components 1A and 1B are addressed by including sources to address potential areas of concern or possible misconceptions and by adapting or modifying sources as needed for students who have specific areas of need or cognitive deficits. All five areas of component 1D are achieved in the selection of sources in IDMCE by utilizing a wide variety of sources for in-class and out-of-class learning; modifying in-

class sources as necessary for appropriate levels of cognitive challenge, interest, and time allocations; and addressing vocabulary difficulties through pre-teaching vocabulary terms or modifying sources as necessary. Components 1E and 1F are also addressed by adjusting sources in a way that provides an appropriate amount of reading and material for the time allotted, the ability to differentiate sources to meet students' individual needs, and additional sources to address student misconceptions or lack of understanding according to the formative and summative assessment results.

The selection of sources in IDMCE also provides several essential elements of Domain 3. Components 3A and 3C are addressed through the selection of sources in IDMCE by selecting or modifying sources as needed to ensure appropriate levels of vocabulary for students' age and previous knowledge, ensuring the sources utilized are appropriately aligned to the intended learning outcomes, and ensuring that sources and materials are modified or utilized in a manner that allows ample time for students to intellectually engage and process their understanding. All three aspects of component 3E can be addressed by utilizing a wise selection of sources, offering proper modifications if necessary, providing potential sources to address possible areas for confusion or misconceptions, providing scaffolded sources or alternate sources for students with individual learning needs, and providing resources for potential misunderstanding or misconceptions that linger when lessons or units have been unsuccessfully taught.

Tasks

The last phase of IDMCE involves designing the student tasks for each lesson. Each lesson may have one or more task(s) or set(s) of questions. The tasks utilize the selected sources to build student understanding so students can successfully answer the supporting question and eventually the compelling question. It is essential that tasks are designed in complete alignment with the supporting question for the lesson, which leads to answering the compelling question for the unit. After completing the tasks assigned for

each lesson, students should build a thorough understanding of the concepts necessary to answer the supporting question effectively by the end of the lesson.

By designing efficient tasks paired with effective instructional strategies, lesson designers can promote a learning environment where all students are involved, all students are intellectually engaged, and student learning involves processing the information from sources to construct an understanding of the important concepts. Ken Coley argues, "Teachers must intentionally plan to include participation opportunities in their lesson plans."[26] This planning is accomplished through the task section of IDMCE. Tasks should include an appropriate level of productive struggle among students, including challenging and thought-provoking prompts and questions with sufficient scaffolding. In IDMCE, tasks are paired with sources to ensure that students are processing the information to build their understanding of important concepts. This replaces the reliance upon teacher lecture and delivery of information in more traditional classroom settings. Instead of teachers telling students what they need to know, what they should think, and how to connect and apply information, tasks allow students to use information from sources to process, connect, and apply their understanding of the information. This style of learning increases the likelihood for long-lasting understanding, transference of knowledge, and true transformation.

Tasks should also require students to exhibit visible thinking, holding them accountable for thinking and learning through writing or discussing the questions and prompts included in activities. It is essential to design tasks in tandem with instructional strategies to ensure that all students are intellectually engaged. This may include the use of Kagan structures or visible thinking routines.[27] By pairing well-designed tasks with

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[26] Ken Coley, "Educational Methodology," in *Christian Education: A Guide to the Foundations of Ministry*, ed. Freddy Cardoza (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 125.

[27] Ron Ritchhart, Mark Church, and Karin Morrison, *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners* (Hoboken: Wiley & Sons, 2011); Ron Ritchhart and Mark Church, *The Power of Making Thinking Visible: Practices to Engage and*

powerful instructional strategies, one can ensure that all students will benefit from the intended purpose of the task.

If one utilizes IDMCE and includes well-aligned and intellectually engaging tasks paired with effective instructional strategies, then many aspects discussed in the supplemental tool will be intentionally included in unit and lesson designs. The selection of tasks according to the IDMCE process will specifically address two components of 1A, all five components of 1B, five components of 1E, two components of 3A, five components of 3B, five components of 3C, and one component of 3D on the modifications and additions section of the supplemental tool.

The IDMCE tasks provide several essential elements of Domain 1. First, they address component 1A by providing students an opportunity to bridge new learning to previous knowledge and experience and ensuring that tasks align to student interest and needs, provide intellectual challenge, and provide real-world connections. Next, they address all five components of 1B by ensuring intellectual engagement through the requirement of visible thinking strategies and structures to ensure that all students participate, modifying tasks as needed for individual student needs, applying to student interest and real-world application, providing a "low floor" and "high ceiling" by utilizing thought-provoking tasks, and providing opportunities for students to apply new learning and make connections to past experiences and personal backgrounds. The IDMCE development of tasks also addresses component 1E by ensuring alignment of tasks to the learning outcomes; ensuring an appropriate structure for lessons with a beginning, middle, and end; ensuring activities have an appropriate amount of time allocated for intellectual engagement and understanding; adding student choice into tasks;

Empower All Learners (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2020). Visible thinking routines are explained in great detail and many examples are provided in these two books.

and ensuring that each tasks includes strategies or structures that require active intellectual engagement through visible thinking from each student.

The development of tasks in IDMCE also provides several essential elements of Domain 3. Component 3A is addressed by ensuring directions or tasks are clear and connect to student interest and by providing an appropriate amount of productive struggle for understanding. It is also addressed by implementing strategies to ensure that students engage each other in dialogue, which can be done by suggesting group leaders and the use of sentence starters for productive group discussion. Component 3B is addressed by ensuring a variety of questions that promote cognitive challenge and deep thought, utilizing questions as a source of promoting learning instead of assessing learning, including strategies to ensure that all students are thinking and responding to questions, and including strategies and structures that promote a genuine discussion among students. Next, IDMCE task development addresses components 3C and 3D by ensuring that each task aligns to the learning outcomes, requiring students to build the understanding necessary to successfully accomplish all aspects of the learning outcomes, appealing to students' interest, requiring high levels of intellectual engagement, providing ample time for students to engage and process their understanding, providing the necessary time for students to respond to each other and extend the learning of peers, providing opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and consolidate their understanding toward meeting the learning outcomes by the end of each lesson, and ensuring that questions and tasks serve as formative assessment by providing teachers with the necessary information to diagnose student learning.

IDMCE Summary

IDMCE would foster the improvement of curriculum design in a multitude of ways. By utilizing IDMCE successfully, curriculum designers will intentionally address many Accomplished and Exemplary components of the FFT, which are included in the

supplemental tool for curriculum adaptation. The first stage of IDMCE planning includes a strong, all-encompassing compelling question aligned to the student learning outcomes. This ensures effective instructional outcomes that are well understood by students and included in all aspects of the unit and lesson design, including the selection of sources, assignment of learning tasks, and the development of assessments.

The second stage of IDMCE planning includes an entry event and QFT strategy that bolster student engagement, inquiry, and participation in driving the learning and assessment criteria throughout the unit. Third, supporting questions serve as the essential structural component of the unit ensuring rigorous alignment of learning tasks and assessments to the compelling question and intended learning outcomes. The fourth stage of IDMCE planning includes the wise selection of a variety of sources that offer essential knowledge for students to utilize in building their understanding of the content. This includes sources for differentiation as well as sources for in-class instruction and out-of-class use for teachers' and students' personal learning and growth.

Lastly, the IDMCE planning process includes intellectually challenging and engaging learning tasks that allow students to utilize sources to build their understanding toward the learning outcomes. These tasks require all students to demonstrate visible thinking as they process, connect, and apply crucial information to build their understanding. After completing the learning tasks, students should build a well-crafted response to the supporting question for each lesson. Finally, students utilize their experience and established understanding from the learning tasks to create a thorough response to the compelling question, ensuring their ability to meet each learning outcome.

IDMCE Unit Checklist

IDMCE is a new unit and lesson design method, and it can be very difficult to accomplish and implement effectively without proper training or understanding of the characteristics of each component. While implementing IDMCE is highly recommended

for instructional effectiveness, research or training in IDMCE planning is also suggested for effective implementation. Three IDM books written by Kathy Swan, John Lee, and S. G. Grant offer an explanation of the original IDM specifically for Social Studies; however, they provides an excellent foundation for the IDMCE structure and essential characteristics of the main IDMCE components.[28] It may also be possible to participate in training sessions led by educators who are experienced and knowledgeable in the original IDM.

An IDMCE unit checklist is included in appendix 3 to aid those who seek to utilize IDMCE unit design. The IDMCE checklist can guide the creation of units or the assessment of previously designed units. By following the checklist, designers can ensure rigorous alignment of all aspects of the unit and effective instructional practices based on the intent of each IDMCE component and the FFT-based suggestions in the supplemental tool.

Conclusion

The research findings and FFT Accomplished and Exemplary criteria were utilized to create an evaluative tool and a supplemental tool for curriculum adaptation. These tools serve to guide churches, schools, or individuals in purchasing, supplementing, and designing curricula. The evaluative tool was created, explained, and verified based on FFT Accomplished and Exemplary characteristics to effectively measure the instructional potential of existing curriculum for purchasing purposes. A supplemental tool was also created and explained to assist teachers and individuals in making necessary adaptations to existing curricula for improvements in instructional effectiveness. Lastly, IDMCE, a curriculum design method for highly effective instruction for Christian education, was introduced and proven effective based on the

[28] Kathy Swan, John Lee, and S. G. Grant have published three books on IDM to date: Grant, Swan, and Lee, *Inquiry-Based Practice in Social Studies Education* (2017); Swan, Lee, and Grant, *Inquiry Design Model* (2018); Swan, Grant, and Lee, *Blueprinting an Inquiry-Based Curriculum* (2019).

established vision for Christian education, FFT Accomplished and Exemplary criteria, and the supplemental tool for curriculum adaptation.

APPENDIX 1

SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS TO THE DANIELSON FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING FOR CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT) can be modified to effectively evaluate curriculum instead of classroom instruction as it was originally designed.[1] The first modification that must be implemented in order to effectively utilize the FFT for curriculum evaluation is that the word "teacher" (or the teacher's name) should be replaced with the word "curriculum," and the word "teachers" should be replaced with the word "curricula." The rest of the sentence would be rewritten if necessary to match the word "curriculum" or "curricula" grammatically. For example, if the criterion on the FFT states, "*Teacher understands* the active nature of student learning and attains information about levels of development for groups of students," then the modified version would state, "*Curriculum displays* the active nature of student learning and *utilizes* information about levels of development for groups of students." While this modification is simple, some areas require a more modified version of the listed criterion. The language requiring modifications beyond the words "teacher" or "teachers" (or a specific teacher's name) are recorded by domain in the tables below.

[1] For the original (i.e., unmodified) FFT utilized in this study, see Charlotte Danielson, "Framework for Teaching," Kentucky Department of Education, 2014, https://education.ky.gov/teachers/PGES/TPGES/Documents/Kentucky%20Framework%20for%20Teaching.pdf.

Domain 1A			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Descriptors	Ineffective	In planning and practice, teacher makes content errors or does not correct errors made by students.	In planning and practice, teacher makes content errors.
Critical Attributes	Accomplished	The teacher answers student questions accurately and provides feedback that furthers their learning. The teacher seeks out content-related professional development.	Suggestions are made for effective feedback that furthers student learning. Curriculum recommends content-related professional learning.
Possible Examples	Ineffective	The teacher says, "I don't understand why the math book has decimals in the same unit as fractions."	Omit
	Developing	The teacher plans to forge ahead with a lesson on addition with regrouping, even though some students have not fully grasped place value.	The curriculum forges ahead with a lesson on addition with regrouping, even though some students have not fully grasped place value, providing no recommendations for addressing student misconceptions.
	Accomplished	The teacher realizes her students are not sure how to use a compass, so she plans to practice that before introducing the activity on angle measurement.	The curriculum suggests that students may not know how to use a compass, so plans are provided to practice that before introducing the activity on angle measurement.
	Exemplary	Before beginning a unit on the solar system, the teacher surveys the class on their beliefs about why it is hotter in the summer than in the winter.	Before beginning a unit on the solar system, the curriculum suggests surveying the class on their beliefs about why it is hotter in the summer than in the winter.

Domain 1B			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Critical Attributes	Ineffective	Teacher does not try to ascertain varied ability levels among students in the class. Teacher is not aware of student interests or cultural heritages. Teacher takes no responsibility to learn about students' medical or learning disabilities.	Curriculum does not suggest avenues for ascertaining varied ability levels among students in the class. Curriculum does not promote utilizing student interests or cultural heritages. Omit

Domain 1B			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Critical Attributes	Developing	The teacher is aware of medical issues and learning disabilities with some students but does not seek to understand the implications of that knowledge.	The curriculum asks teachers to be aware of medical issues and learning disabilities with students but does not assist in applying that knowledge to instruction.
	Accomplished	The teacher knows, for groups of students, their levels of cognitive development. The teacher is aware of the different cultural groups in the class. The teacher has a good idea of the range of interests of students in the class. The teacher has identified "high", "medium", and "low". groups of students within the class. The teacher is well informed about students' cultural heritage and incorporates this knowledge into lesson planning. The teacher is aware of the special needs represented by students in the class	The curriculum suggests that teachers learn students' levels of cognitive development. Omit Curriculum prompts teachers to get a good idea of the range of interests of students in the class. Curriculum prompts teachers to identify and utilize "high", "medium", and "low" groups of students within the class. Omit Curriculum prompts teachers to identify the special needs represented by students in the class.
	Exemplary	The teacher seeks out information about their cultural heritage from all students. The teacher maintains a system of updated student records and incorporates medical and/or learning needs into lesson plans.	Omit The curriculum prompts teacher to maintain a system of updated student records and incorporates medical and/or learning needs into lesson plans.
Possible Examples	Ineffective	The teacher plans to teach his class Christmas carols, despite the fact that he has four religions represented among his students.	Omit

Domain 1B			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Possible Examples	Developing	In the unit on Mexico, the teacher has not incorporated perspectives from the three Mexican-American children in the class. The teacher knows that some of her students have IEPs, but they're so long that she hasn't read them yet.	Omit The curriculum does not address the needs of students with IEP's.
	Accomplished	The teacher creates an assessment of students' levels of cognitive development. The teacher examines previous year's cumulative folders to ascertain the proficiency levels of groups of students in the class. The teacher administers a student interest survey at the beginning of the school year. The teacher knows that five of her students are in the Garden Club; she plans to have them discuss horticulture as part of the next biology lesson. The teacher realizes that not all of his students are Christian and so he plans to read a Hanukkah story in December.	The curriculum includes an assessment of students' levels of cognitive development. Omit The curriculum includes a student interest survey at the beginning of the school year. Omit Omit
	Exemplary	The teacher attends the local Mexican heritage day, meeting several of his students' extended families.	Omit

Domain 1D			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Critical Attributes	Ineffective	The teacher does not seek out resources available to expand his or her own skill. Although aware of some student needs, the teacher does not inquire about possible resources.	The curriculum does not point out resources available to expand the teacher's own skill. The curriculum does not offer additional possible resources.
	Developing	The teacher participates in content-area workshops offered by the school but does not pursue other professional development. The teacher locates materials and resources for students that are available through the school but does not pursue any other avenues.	The curriculum does not offer resources for professional learning for teachers. The curriculum offers materials but does not point to resources outside of the curriculum itself.
	Accomplished	Teacher expands knowledge with professional learning groups and organizations. Teacher pursues options offered by universities.	The curriculum includes professional learning options, including groups and organizations for teachers. Omit
	Exemplary	The teacher has ongoing relationship with colleges and universities that support student learning. The teacher pursues apprenticeships to increase discipline knowledge. The teacher facilitates student contact with resources outside the classroom	The curriculum offers groups to support professional learning among teachers. Omit The curriculum offers materials and resources for students to pursue outside of the classroom.
Possible Examples	Ineffective	Mr. J is not sure how to teach fractions but doesn't know how he's expected to learn it by himself. A student says, "It's too bad we can't go to the nature center when we're doing our unit on environment."	Curriculum does not support teachers in building their understanding of the concepts they are responsible for teaching. Omit

Domain 1D			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Possible Examples	Developing	For a unit on ocean life, the teacher really needs more books, but the school library has only three for him to borrow. The teacher knows she should learn more about teaching literacy, but the school offered only one professional development day last year. The teacher thinks his students would benefit from	For a unit on ocean life, the teacher really needs more resources, but the curriculum suggests only three to use. Omit Since students may benefit from hearing about health safety from a professional; the curriculum suggests contacting the school nurse to visit the classroom.
	Accomplished	The teacher took an online course on literature to expand her knowledge of great American writers.	The curriculum provided an online course/tutorial course on literature to expand her knowledge of great American writers.
	Exemplary	The teacher is not happy with the out-of-date textbook; his students will critique it and write their own text for social studies. The teacher spends the summer at Dow Chemical learning about current research so that she can expand her knowledge base for teaching chemistry. The teacher matches students in her Family and Consumer Science class with local businesses; the students spend time shadowing employees to understand how their classroom skills might be used on the job.	Omit The curriculum recommends several options for teacher exposure to current research so they can expand their knowledge base for teaching chemistry. The curriculum suggests matching students in the Family and Consumer Science class with local businesses; the students will spend time shadowing employees to understand how their classroom skills might be used on the job.

Domain 1E			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Possible Examples	Ineffective	The teacher organizes her class in rows, seating the students alphabetically; she plans to have students work all year in groups of four selected on the basis of where they are sitting. The teacher's lesson plans are written on sticky notes in his grade book; they indicate lecture, activity, or test.	The curriculum recommends organizing the class in rows, seating the students alphabetically; plans recommend that students work all year in groups of four selected on the basis of where they are sitting. Curriculum indicates lecture, activity, or test.
	Developing	The teacher has found an atlas to use as a supplemental resource during the geography unit. The teacher always lets students select their own working groups because they behave better when they can choose with whom they wish to sit.	The curriculum suggests an atlas to use as a supplemental resource during the geography unit. The curriculum suggests students selecting their own working groups because they behave better when they can choose with whom they wish to sit or does not address this.
	Accomplished	The teacher reviews lesson plans with her principal; they are well structured with pacing times and activities clearly indicated.	Lessons are well structured with pacing times and activities clearly indicated.

Domain 1F			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Critical Attributes	Exemplary	Students participate in designing assessments for their own work. Students develop rubrics according to teacher-specified learning objectives. Students are actively involved in collecting information from formative assessments and provide input.	Curriculum requires students to participate in designing assessments for their own work. Curriculum requires students to develop rubrics according to teacher-specified learning objectives. Curriculum requires students to be actively involved in collecting information from formative assessments and provide input.

Domain 1F			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Possible Examples	Ineffective	The teacher marks papers on the foundation of the U.S. constitution on the basis of grammar and punctuation; for every mistake, the grade drops from an A to a B, a B to a C, etc.	The curriculum suggests marking papers on the foundation of the U.S. constitution on the basis of grammar and punctuation; for every mistake, the grade drops from an A to a B, a B to a C, etc.
		After the students present their research on globalization, the teacher tells them their letter grade. When students ask how he has arrived at the grade, he responds, "After all these years in education, I just know what grade to give."	Omit
		The teacher says, "What's the difference between formative assessment and the test I give at the end of the unit?"	The curriculum does not include or specify the use of formative and summative assessments.
		The teacher says, "The district gave me this entire curriculum to teach, so I just have to keep moving."	The curriculum promotes the concept of moving along, even when students do not understand.
	Developing	The teacher's students receive their tests back; each one is simply marked with a letter grade at the top.	Omit
		A student says, "If half the class passed the test, why are we all reviewing the material again?"	Omit
	Exemplary	Mrs. T has developed a routine for her class: students know that if they are struggling with a math concept, they will sit in a small group with her during workshop time.	Curriculum promotes the use of small groups or workshop time to help students who are struggling with a math concept.

Domain 3A			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Descriptors	Developing	The teacher's attempt to explain the instructional purpose has only limited success, and/or directions and procedures must be clarified after initial student confusion.	The curriculum's attempt to explain the instructional purpose has only limited success, and/or directions and procedures must be clarified.
	Exemplary	Students contribute to extending the content and help explain concepts to their classmates.	The curriculum promotes students contribution to extending the content and help in explaining concepts to their classmates.
Critical Attributes	Ineffective	Students indicate through their questions that they are confused about the learning task. Students indicate through body language or questions that they don't understand the content being presented.	Omit Omit
	Developing	The teacher must clarify the learning task so that student can complete it.	The learning task must be clarified so that students could understand and complete it.
	Accomplished	Students engage with the learning task, indicating that they understand what they are to do.	Omit
	Exemplary	All students seem to understand the presentation.	Omit
Possible Examples	Ineffective	A student asks, "What are we supposed to be doing? But the teacher ignores the question. The teacher states that to add fractions they must have the same numerator. Students have a quizzical look on their faces; some may withdraw from the lesson. Students become disruptive, or talk among themselves in an effort to follow the lesson.	Omit The curriculum states that to add fractions they must have the same numerator. Directions are unclear and must be read multiple times for understanding.

Domain 3A			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Possible Examples	Developing	The teacher mispronounces some common words.	Omit
		A student asks, "What are we supposed to be doing?" and the teacher clarifies the task.	Omit
		Students ask, "What do I write here?" in order to complete a task.	Omit
		A number of students do not seem to be following the explanation.	Teacher cannot easily follow the explanation in curriculum.
		Students are inattentive during the teacher's explanation of content.	Explanation in curriculum is lengthy, requiring long periods of teacher talk.
	Exemplary	When help is needed a student offers clarification about the learning task to classmates.	Omit

Domain 3B			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Descriptors	Ineffective	Interaction between teacher and students is predominantly recitation style, with the teacher mediating all questions and answers.	The curriculum offers no direction for teachers on how to promote discussion among students, possibly allowing the interaction between teacher and student to be recitation style.
		A few students dominate the discussion.	Curriculum does not provide strategies for effective student discussion where many students are heard.
	Developing	Alternatively, the teacher attempts to frame some questions designed to promote student thinking and understanding, but only a few students are involved.	Although questions are designed to promote student thinking and understanding, the curriculum does not contain strategies to ensure most students are involved.
		Teacher attempts to engage all students in the discussion and to encourage them to respond to one another, but with uneven results.	The curriculum encourages teachers to include all students in the discussion, but strategies are not in place to ensure it.

Domain 3B			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Descriptors	Exemplary	Students formulate many questions, initiate topics, and make unsolicited contributions. Students themselves ensure that all voices are heard in the discussion.	Curriculum encourages students to formulate many questions, initiate topics, and make unsolicited contributions. Curriculum presents instructional methods requiring all student voices to be heard in discussions.
Critical Attributes	Ineffective	A few Students dominate the discussion.	Curriculum does not discourage a few students from dominating the discussion in any way.
	Developing	Teacher frames some questions designed to promote student thinking, but only a small number of students are involved. The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but few students respond. Teacher calls on many students, but only a few actually participate in the discussion.	Curriculum frames some questions designed to promote student thinking, but does not provide instructional strategies to ensure many students are involved. The curriculum asks for students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but does not provide strategies to ensure all voices are heard. Curriculum does not provide strategies requiring participation from many students.
	Accomplished	The teacher effectively builds on student responses to questions. Discussions enable students to talk to one another without ongoing mediation by the teacher. The teacher calls on most students, even those who don't initially volunteer. Many students actively engage in the discussion.	The curriculum offers examples for teachers to effectively build on student responses. Curriculum includes instructional strategies that enable students to talk to one another without ongoing teacher mediation. The curriculum provides instructional strategies providing opportunity for all students to be heard. Omit

Domain 3B			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Critical Attributes	Exemplary	Students initiate higher-order questions. Students extend the discussion, enriching it. Students invite comments from their classmates during a discussion.	Curriculum provides opportunity and strategies to encourage students to initiate higher-order questions. Omit Curriculum provides strategies or norms that encourage students to invite comments from their classmates during a discussion.
Possible Examples	Ineffective	The teacher calls only upon students who have their hands up.	Curriculum does not specify how teachers should instruct students to answer questions, potentially allowing for only those called upon to answer.
	Developing	The teacher asks: "Who has an idea about this?" but only the usual three students offer comments. The teacher asks: "Michael can you comment on Mary's idea?" but Michael does not respond or makes a comment directly to the teacher.	Omit Curriculum does not provide strategies or norms to encourage students to respond or make comments directly to each other.
	Accomplished	The teacher asks, "Michael, can you comment on Mary's idea?" and Michael responds directly to Mary. After posing a question and asking each of the students to write a brief response and then share it with a partner, the teacher invites a few to offer their ideas to the entire class.	Curriculum provides strategies or norms to encourage students to respond or make comments directly to each other. Curriculum suggests posing a question and asking each of the students to write a brief response and then share it with a partner, then suggests the teacher invites a few to offer their ideas to the entire class.

Domain 3B			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Possible Examples	Exemplary	A student asks, "How many ways are there to get this answer?"	Curriculum encourages students to ask questions to better their understanding, such as prompting students to finish the statement, "I'm wondering . . ."
		A student says to a classmate, "I don't think I agree with you on this, because . . ."	Curriculum encourages students to discuss in groups by using prompts such as, "I agree because . . ." and "I disagree because . . ."
		A student asks of other students, "Does anyone have another idea how we might figure this out?"	Omit
		A student asks, "What if . . .?	Omit

Domain 3C			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Descriptors	Ineffective	Few students are intellectually engaged or interested.	Curriculum does not require intellectual engagement or involve student interest.
	Accomplished	The learning tasks and activities are aligned with instructional outcomes and designed to challenge student thinking, the result being that most students display active intellectual engagement with important and challenging content and are supported in that engagement by teacher scaffolding.	The learning tasks and activities are aligned with instructional outcomes and designed to challenge student thinking, and curriculum offers guidance to teachers for scaffolded support of student learning.
	Exemplary	In addition, there is evidence of some student initiation of inquiry and of student contribution to the exploration of important content.	Curriculum includes prompts, questions, or tasks that require student initiation of inquiry and student contribution to the exploration of important content.
Critical Attributes	Ineffective	Few students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.	Student intellectual engagement is not required for learning tasks.

Domain 3C			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Critical Attributes	Developing	Some students are intellectually engaged in the lesson. Students are, in large part, passively engaged with the content, learning primarily facts or procedures.	Curriculum does not offer strategies that encourage all students to be intellectually engaged. Curriculum is written without engagement strategies, allowing student the opportunity to be passively engaged, learning primarily facts or procedures.
	Accomplished	Most students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.	Learning tasks and strategies require intellectual engagement from most students.
	Exemplary	Virtually all students are highly engaged in the lesson. Students take initiative to modify a learning task to make it more meaningful or relevant to their needs. Students suggest modifications to the grouping patterns used. Students suggest modifications or additions to materials being used.	Learning tasks and strategies require high intellectual engagement from virtually all students. Curriculum provides opportunities for students to suggest modifications to learning tasks to make them more meaningful or relevant. Omit Omit
Possible Examples	Exemplary	A student asks whether they might remain in their small groups to complete another section of the activity, rather than work independently.	Omit

Domain 3D			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Descriptors	Ineffective	Students do not appear to be aware of the assessment criteria and do not engage in self-assessment.	Curriculum does not make students aware of the assessment criteria or engage them in self-assessment.
	Developing	Feedback to students is general, students appear to be only partially aware of the assessment criteria used to evaluate their work, and few assess their own work.	Curriculum appears to make students only partially aware of the assessment criteria used to evaluate their work and does not require all students to assess their own work.

Domain 3D			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Descriptors	Accomplished	Students appear to be aware of the assessment criteria; some of them engage in self-assessment.	Curriculum appears to make students aware of the assessment criteria used to evaluate their work and requires some to assess their own work.
	Exemplary	Students appear to be aware of, and there is some evidence that they have contributed to, the assessment criteria. Students self-assess and monitor their progress. A variety of feedback, from both their teacher and their peers, is accurate, specific, and advances learning.	Curriculum appears to make students aware of the assessment criteria and provides students the opportunity to contribute to the assessment criteria. Students are required to self-assess and monitor their progress. Curriculum suggests the use of teacher and student to student feedback that advances learning through appropriate strategies to include all students.
Critical Attributes	Developing	There is little evidence that the students understand how their work will be evaluated. Feedback to students is not uniformly specific and not oriented toward future improvement of the work.	Curriculum does not provide students the opportunity to understand how their work will be evaluated. Curriculum does not offer opportunity for feedback to students that is oriented toward future improvement of the work.
	Accomplished	Students indicate that they clearly understand the characteristics of high quality work.	Curriculum provides students an understanding of the characteristics of high quality work.
	Exemplary	There is evidence that students have helped establish the evaluation criteria. Teacher monitoring of student understanding is sophisticated and continuous: the teacher is constantly "taking the pulse" of the class. Feedback to students is specific and timely, and is provided from many sources, including other students. Students monitor their own understanding, either on their own initiative or as a result of tasks set by their teacher.	Curriculum promotes the inclusion of student involvement in establishing the evaluation criteria. Curriculum encourages teachers to monitor student understanding by constantly "taking the pulse" of the class. Curriculum offers opportunity for students to receive feedback from a variety of sources, including other students. Curriculum offers the opportunity for students to monitor their own understanding through tasks or instructional strategies.

Domain 3D			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Possible Examples	Ineffective	A student asks: "How is this assignment going to be graded?" A student asks, "Does this quiz count toward my grade?" The teacher says: "Good job, everyone."	Omit Omit Curriculum does not offer examples of effective feedback to advance learning.
	Developing	When a student completes a problem on the board, the teacher corrects the student's work without explaining why. The teacher, after receiving a correct response from one student, continues without ascertaining whether all students understand the concept.	Omit Curriculum does not offer effective strategies for ascertaining student understanding from a variety of students.
	Accomplished	The teacher circulates during small group or independent work, offering suggestions to groups of students.	The curriculum encourages teachers to circulate during small group or independent work, offering suggestions to groups of students.
	Exemplary	While students are working, the teacher circulates, providing substantive feedback to individual students. Students offer feedback to their classmates on their work. Students evaluate a piece of their writing rubric and confer with the teacher about how it could be improved.	The curriculum encourages teachers to circulate during small group or independent work, offering examples of substantive feedback to individual students. Curriculum includes tasks or strategies requiring students to offer feedback to their classmates on their work. Curriculum provides opportunities for students to form or evaluate rubrics in order to improve them.

Domain 3E			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Descriptors	Ineffective	Teacher adheres to the instruction plan in spite of evidence of poor student understanding or lack of interest. Teacher ignores student questions; when students experience difficulty, the teacher blames the students or their home environment.	Curriculum offers no guidance to teachers on checking for or addressing a lack of student understanding or interest. Curriculum does not promote or offer opportunity for student questions and does not plan for student difficulty.
	Developing	Teacher attempts to modify the lesson when needed and to respond to student questions and interests, with moderate success. Teacher accepts responsibility for student success but has only a limited repertoire of strategies to draw upon.	Curriculum offers occasional modifications if students are struggling to understand. Curriculum does not offer many strategies for ensuring student engagement and success.
	Accomplished	Teacher promotes the successful learning of all students, making minor adjustments as needed to instruction plans and accommodating student questions, needs, and interests. Drawing on a broad repertoire of strategies, the teacher persists in seeking approaches for students who have difficulty learning.	Curriculum promotes the successful learning of all students, suggesting minor adjustments to be made to instruction plans if necessary and promotes student questions, needs, and interests. Curriculum includes instructional strategies and resources for students who may have difficulty learning.
	Exemplary	Teacher seizes an opportunity to enhance learning, building on a spontaneous event or student interests, or successfully adjusts and differentiates instruction to address individual student misunderstandings. Teacher persists in seeking effective approaches for students who need help, using an extensive repertoire of instructional strategies and soliciting additional resources from the school or community.	Curriculum builds on student interest and offers successful adjustments and differentiations for instruction to address individual student misunderstandings. Curriculum includes an extensive repertoire of instructional strategies and additional resources for students who may have difficulty learning.

Domain 3E			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Critical Attributes	Ineffective	Teacher ignores indications of student boredom or lack of understanding. Teacher brushes aside student questions. Teacher makes no attempt to incorporate student interests into the lesson. The teacher conveys to students that when they have difficulty learning it is their fault. In reflecting on practice, the teacher does not indicate that it is important to reach all students.	Curriculum is boring and does not promote student understanding. Curriculum does not offer opportunity for student questions or comments. Student interest is not incorporated or considered in curriculum. Omit Curriculum does not reflect the importance or strategies necessary for reaching all students.
	Developing	Teacher's efforts to modify the lesson are only partially successful. The teacher conveys a sense to students of their own responsibility for their learning but is uncertain about how to assist them. In reflecting on practice, the teacher indicates the desire to reach all students but does not suggest strategies to do so.	Curriculum offers modifications that are only partially effective. Curriculum conveys a sense to students of their own responsibility for their learning, but does not offer instructional strategies or norms to assist them. Curriculum does not include strategies or norms to effectively reach all students.
	Accomplished	When necessary, the teacher makes adjustments to the lesson to enhance understanding by groups of students. The teacher conveys to students that he has other approaches to try when the students experience difficulty. In reflecting on practice, the teacher cites multiple approaches undertaken to reach students having difficulty.	Curriculum offers adjustments to the lesson to enhance understanding by groups of students. Curriculum offers teachers suggestions for additional approaches or resources to try when students experience difficulty. Curriculum offers multiple strategies and resources for assisting teachers in ensuring all students reach understanding.

Domain 3E			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Critical Attributes	Exemplary	The teacher seizes on a teachable moment to enhance a lesson. The teacher conveys to students that she won't consider a lesson "finished" until every student understands and that she has a broad range of approaches to use. In reflecting on practice, the teacher can cite others in the school and beyond whom he has contacted for assistance in reaching some students.	Omit Curriculum conveys that teachers should not consider a lesson "finished" until every student understands and it supplies teachers with a broad range of strategies and resources to use. Curriculum offers a multitude of additional resources for reaching students.
Possible Examples	Ineffective	The teacher says, "We don't have time for that today." The teacher says, "If you'd just pay attention, you could understand this."	Omit Curriculum encourages teachers to offer support and resources until students gain understanding.
	Developing	The teacher says, "I'll try to think of another way to come at this and get back to you." The teacher says, "I realize not everyone understands this, but we can't spend any more time on it." The teacher rearranges the way the students are grouped in an attempt to help students understand the lesson.	Curriculum states that when teachers aren't sure how to address student questions or concerns, "I'll try to think of another way to come at this and get back to you." Curriculum does not help teachers understand that lessons aren't considered over until students understand. Curriculum recommends regrouping students in an attempt to help students understand the lesson.
	Accomplished	The teacher says, "That's an interesting idea; let's see how it fits." The teacher illustrates a principle of good writing to a student using his interest in basketball as context. The teacher says, "Let's try this way and then uses another approach."	Omit Curriculum offers examples such as illustrating a principle of good writing to a student using his interest in basketball as context. Curriculum offers multiple approaches for helping students understand in case misconceptions arise.

Domain 3E			
Type of Guidance	Scoring Range	Original FFT Language	Modified FFT Language
Possible Examples	Exemplary	The teacher stops midstream in a lesson, and says, “This activity doesn’t seem to be working! Here’s another way I’d like you to try it.”	Curriculum promotes teacher awareness and flexibility by giving this example: It’s okay to stop midstream in a lesson, and say, “This activity doesn’t seem to be working! Here’s another way I’d like you to try it.”
		The teacher incorporates the school’s upcoming championship game into an explanation of averages.	Omit
		The teacher says, “If we have to come back to this tomorrow, we will; it’s really important that you understand it.”	Curriculum states for teachers, “If you have to come back to this lesson next time, it’s okay. It’s really important that students understand it.”

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation Evaluation Tool

1A: Knowledge of content and pedagogy				
Curriculum displays extensive knowledge about important concepts in the specific content and how it relates to other content.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum reflects an understanding of prerequisite knowledge and relationships among topics and provides the cognitive structures necessary for students to link knowledge and ensure understanding.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum reflects a wide range of effective pedagogical approaches.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes possible misconceptions and the necessary content and strategies to address them before proceeding.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 1A: Knowledge of content and pedagogy	___/16			
1B: Demonstrating knowledge of students				
Curriculum requires active intellectual engagement with content for all students.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides an opportunity for teachers to attain information about the levels of cognitive development among students.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes content that is applicable to student interests.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum displays an awareness of "high," "medium," and "low" students and utilizes this in lesson plans and strategies.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes material appropriate for a wide variety of cultural heritages and provides students an opportunity to draw from their cultural experiences.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum addresses possible special needs that may impede learning. Resources and suggested modifications are incorporated into learning plans.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 1B: Demonstrating knowledge of students	___/24			

1C: Setting instructional outcomes				
Curriculum provides rigorous instructional outcomes reflective of important concepts. Curriculum also provides directions for teachers to effectively introduce these outcomes to students.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes clear instructional outcomes in the form of what students will learn, not what students will do.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes instructional outcomes with viable methods of assessment.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes instructional outcomes reflective of different types of learning, including knowledge, conceptual understanding, reasoning, and application.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes instructional outcomes that provide an opportunity for coordination and integration of other concepts and reflect previous and future learning.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes instructional outcomes that display consideration of the needs of each individual student.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 1C: Setting instructional outcomes	___/24			
1D: Demonstrating knowledge of resources				
Curriculum displays extensive knowledge of related resources.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum utilizes a variety of resources appropriate to the needs of the teacher and each individual student.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes a variety of resources for class time use.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes potential resources for the expansion of the teacher's knowledge and personal growth.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes potential resources for the expansion of individual students' knowledge and personal growth outside of class time.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum resources used for class time are aligned to the skill level of students and time restraints for in-class instruction. Resources are summarized, modified, or adapted as necessary for classroom instruction and for a variety of student special needs.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 1D: Demonstrating knowledge of resources	___/24			
1E: Designing coherent instruction				
Curriculum displays a series of learning activities designed to engage all students in high-level cognitive activity.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum displays a combination of appropriately challenging resources, in-depth content knowledge, and an understanding of students' needs.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides some opportunity for student choice.	1	2	3	4

1E: Designing coherent instruction				
Curriculum displays learning activities with possibilities for differentiation and suggested grouping patterns.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides resources for differentiation.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum displays well-structured, clear units and lessons with appropriate time allocations for each activity.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 1E: Designing coherent instruction	___/24			
1F: Designing student assessments				
Curriculum includes assessments that fully align with and measure all instructional outcomes.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides evidence of student inclusion in the contribution of assessment development.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides potential assessment modifications for individual student needs.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum utilizes formative assessment (assessment for learning) in each lesson with suggested instruction, questioning, or discussion based on the results.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum guides teachers in utilizing the assessment results for future instruction and possible modifications to instruction.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes student participation in the development of rubrics and the utilization of personal assessment data to further learning.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 1F: Designing student assessments	___/24			
Total Score for Domain 1	____/136			

Domain 3: Instruction Evaluation Tool

3A: Communicating with students				
Curriculum provides directions or strategies for teachers to clearly communicate the instructional purpose of lessons to students and links this purpose to student interest.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes clear and accurate directions, anticipates possible student misunderstandings, and provides guidance for potential confusion.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides instruction for clear explanations of content while also developing student conceptual understanding through an appropriate amount of challenge and strategic scaffolding.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides strategies and structures to intellectually engage students in dialogue and explicitly promotes opportunities for students to extend the content and explain concepts to each other.	1	2	3	4

3A: Communicating with students				
Curriculum includes clear and correct utilization of vocabulary appropriate to students' age and interests and provides opportunities to enrich students' vocabularies.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 3A: Communicating with students	___/20			
3B: Questioning and discussion techniques				
Curriculum includes a variety of questions or prompts to challenge students cognitively, requiring more than single correct responses.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes questions that promote student understanding and metacognition.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes strategies that encourage students to formulate many questions, initiate topics, and make unsolicited contributions.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes strategies and structures to ensure that all students are thinking and responding to questions, that all students are involved, and that all voices are heard.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides strategies to promote genuine discussion among students without constant teacher mediation.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides strategies that encourage students themselves to ensure that all voices are heard in discussions and to invite comments from their classmates.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 3B: Questioning and discussion techniques	___/24			
3C: Engaging students in learning				
Curriculum displays excellent alignment between student understanding built from learning tasks and the instructional outcomes.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum is designed to challenge student thinking and promote high levels of intellectual engagement and interest.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides an appropriate pace for each lesson with appropriate amounts of time for each activity in a manner that allows for true intellectual engagement.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum includes time for students to reflect on their learning and consolidate their understanding at the end of each lesson.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides some student choice and opportunities for students to help each other.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides opportunities for students to initiate inquiry and contribute to the exploration of content.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 3C: Engaging students in learning	___/24			
3D: Using assessment in instruction				
Curriculum includes questions, prompts, and assessments to aid teachers in diagnosing student learning.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides clear assessment criteria and opportunities for students to self-assess learning and monitor progress.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides opportunities for students to contribute to the formation of the assessment criteria.	1	2	3	4

3D: Using assessment in instruction				
Curriculum provides teachers guidance in utilizing assessment results to provide accurate feedback and necessary modifications to advance learning.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum provides opportunities for students to assess each other and offer feedback to peers that advances learning.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 3D: Using assessment in instruction	___/20			
3E: Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness				
Curriculum includes predetermined areas for potential misconceptions or confusion and offers teachers guidance for potential adjustments.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum offers extensive strategies and resources to accommodate student needs, interests, and misconceptions.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum offers extensive strategies and resources for students who have difficulty learning.	1	2	3	4
Curriculum conveys that a lesson should not be complete until all students have gained understanding and offers suggestions for students who fail to build understanding.	1	2	3	4
Total Score for 3E: Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness	___/16			
Total Score for Domain 3	____/104			

APPENDIX 3

IDMCE UNIT CHECKLIST

Compelling Question (CQ)	**Needs Work**	**Partially**	**Accom-plished**	**Com-ments**
Is it compelling to students?				
Does CQ incorporate understanding of all Supporting Questions (SQs)?				
How would you like your students to answer this CQ? What needs to be included based on standards/learning outcomes? (SQs should support this answer.) Based on this information, does the CQ need to be adjusted?				
Entry Event and QFT	**Needs Work**	**Partially**	**Accom-plished**	**Com-ments**
Does the entry event fully align with the CQ?				
Does the entry event allow for student inquiry/curiosity/questioning about the CQ?				
Are students required to connect the entry event to the CQ? Can they see the connection? Are there connection/application questions that assist them in this?				
Is the QFT strategy utilized to elicit student inquiry and the driving question board?				
Are the anticipated student QFT responses reflected in the SQs?				

Supporting Questions (SQ)	**Needs Work**	**Partially**	**Accom-plished**	**Com-ments**
Which standards/learning outcomes are included in SQs? Do SQs represent the rigor of each of the bundled standards/learning outcomes?				
Do SQs build in order of intellectual challenge and student understanding?				
Do SQs require student understanding of all aspects of each learning outcome?				
Do SQs reflect anticipated student QFT responses/student driving question board?				
What do you want your students to say about each SQ?				
Is each SQ presented in a way that students understand the assessment criteria by the end of the lesson and can self-assess toward this throughout the lesson?				
Sources	**Needs Work**	**Partially**	**Accom-plished**	**Com-ments**
Have sources been modified/adapted/utilized in the best way possible?				
Do sources include necessary content and vocabulary?				
Do sources best support the SQs and the CQ?				
Are sources grade/lexile appropriate? If not, can they be modified?				
Are there sources that address multiple answer stems/different perspectives if necessary?				
Summative Assessment (SA)	**Needs Work**	**Partially**	**Accom-plished**	**Com-ments**
Does the final SA require a thorough understanding of the CQ and each SQ?				
Does SA require reliance on evidence from sources?				

Summative Assessment (SA)	**Needs Work**	**Partially**	**Accom-plished**	**Com-ments**
Does the SA rubric include necessary evidence and vocabulary requirements?				
Did students contribute to the SA rubric (most likely by participating in QFT)? Is this connection clear to students?				
How would you like for students to respond? Does this align to SA rubric?				
Tasks	**Needs Work**	**Partially**	**Accom-plished**	**Com-ments**
Do tasks involve high levels of cognitive challenge, supported by scaffolding as necessary?				
Do tasks utilize/require application of understanding from sources?				
Does student understanding from tasks completely align with the intended goal/answer for the SQ and CQ?				
Do tasks require and hold students accountable for independent understanding?				
Do tasks require student collaboration and discussion?				
Do tasks require a consolidated/processed understanding of or toward the SQ by the end of each lesson?				
Are tasks structured (chunked) appropriately for monitoring understanding and providing breaks (brain dumps) for students to process toward understanding the SQ?				
Do tasks allow for differentiation and multiple responses to the SQ, or do they lead students to one answer if necessary?				

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ABSTRACT

EVALUATING HIGH SCHOOL CHURCH CURRICULA VIA THE DANIELSON FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING: A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

Lindsey Brook Wilkerson, PhD
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Chair: Dr. Anthony W. Foster

The purpose of this qualitative study was to evaluate current evangelical small group or Sunday school curricula for high school students using the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT). The literature review revealed large-scale problems with Christianity in the U.S., problems in Christian education, and finally deficiencies in church curricula. The literature review also revealed a faith-based constructivist curriculum that effectively supports active learning that leads to Christlike transformation.

The FFT was introduced and proven to be a valid and reliable tool for measuring student learning and the evaluation of curricula. By utilizing Domains 1 and 3 of the FFT to evaluate curricula, strengths and weaknesses were discovered, analyzed, and reported in order to strengthen curricula and therefore Christian education in churches. Tools for curriculum evaluation and supplementation were established and a curriculum design method, faith-based IDM, was proven effective for instruction based on FFT criterion.

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