Historical Foundations of Curriculum

● FOCUSING QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to know curriculum's historical foundations?
2. How did U.S. schools modify European educational ideas?
3. How did U.S. democratic ideas contribute to the rise of public schooling in the United States?
4. In what ways did U.S. nationalism influence the curriculum during the first half of the nineteenth century?
5. How did nineteenth-century European pioneers of pedagogy influence the U.S. school curriculum?
6. What unique problems were evidenced in the nineteenth century as the elementary (secondary) school curriculum developed?
7. How did the Committee of Fifteen and the Committee of Ten influence twentieth-century curriculum?
8. How did scientism in education influence curriculum making?
9. What roles can historians of curriculum play within the field of curriculum?
10. What value do you give to a historical sense of curriculum?

Knowledge of curriculum's history provides guidance for today's curriculum makers. We begin our discussion with the colonial period and proceed through the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Most of our discussion focuses on the past 100 years.

The Colonial Period: 1642–1776

Curriculum's historical foundations are largely rooted in the educational experiences of colonial Massachusetts. Massachusetts was settled mainly by Puritans who adhered to strict theological principles. The first New England schools were closely tied to the Puritan church. According to educational historians, school's
primary purpose was to teach children to read the Scriptures and notices of civil affairs. Reading was the most important subject, followed by writing and spelling, for understanding the catechism and common law. Since colonial days, therefore, reading and related language skills have been basic to American education and the elementary school curriculum.

Three Colonial Regions

Schools in colonial Massachusetts derived from two sources: (1) 1642 legislation required parents and guardians to ensure that children could read and understand the principles of religion and the laws of the Commonwealth, and (2) the “Old Deluder Satan” Act of 1647, which required every town of 50 or more families to appoint a reading and writing teacher. Towns of 100 or more families were to employ a teacher of Latin so that students could be prepared to enter Harvard College. Except for Rhode Island, the other New England colonies followed Massachusetts’s example. These early laws reveal how important education was to the Puritan settlers. Some historians consider these laws the roots of U.S. school law and the public school movement. The Puritans valued literacy partly as a way of preventing the formation of a large underclass, such as existed in England and other parts of Europe. They also wanted to ensure that their children would grow up committed to the religious doctrines.

Unlike New England, the middle colonies had no common language or religion. George Beauchamp writes, “Competition among political and religious groups retarded willingness to expend the public funds for educational purposes.” No single system of schools could be established. Instead parochial and independent schools related to different ethnic and religious groups evolved. Schools were locally rather than centrally controlled. The current notion of cultural pluralism thus took shape some 250 years ago.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, educational decisions in the southern colonies were generally left to the family. On behalf of poor children, orphans, and illegitimate children, legislation was enacted to ensure that their guardians provided private instruction—for example, in vocational skills. However, the plantation system of landholding, slavery, and gentry created great educational inequity. In general, the white children of plantation owners were privately tutored while poor whites received no formal education. Unable to read and write, many poor whites became subsistence farmers like their parents. The law prohibited slave children from learning to read or write. The South’s economic and political system “tended to retard the development of a large-scale system of schools. This education [handicap] was felt long after the Civil War period.”

Despite the regional variations, the schools of New England, the middle Atlantic colonies, and the South all were influenced by English political ideas. Also, despite differences in language, religion, and economic systems, religious commitment was a high priority in most schools. “The curriculum of the colonial schools consisted of reading, writing, and [some] arithmetic along with the rudiments of religious faith and lessons designed to develop manners and morals.” It was a traditional curriculum, stressing basic skills, timeless and absolute values, social and
religious conformity, faith in authority, knowledge for the sake of knowledge, rote learning, and memorization. The curriculum reflected the belief that children were born in sin, play was idleness, and children’s talk was gibberish. The teacher applied strict discipline. This approach to the curriculum dominated American education until the rise of progressivism.

**Colonial Schools**

Schools were important institutions for colonial society. However, a much smaller percentage of children attended elementary or secondary school than do today.

**Town Schools.** In the New England colonies, the town school was a locally controlled public elementary school. Often it was a crude, one-room structure dominated by the teacher’s pulpit at the front of the room and attended by boys and girls of the community. Students sat on benches and studied their assignments until the teacher called on them to recite. The children ranged in age from 5 or 6 to 13 or 14. Attendance was not always regular; it depended on weather conditions and on the extent to which individual families needed their children to work on their farms.  

**Parochial and Private Schools.** In the middle colonies, parochial and private schools predominated. Missionary societies and various religious and ethnic groups established elementary schools for their own children. Like the New England town schools, these schools focused on reading, writing, and religious sermons. In the South, upper-class children attended private schools oriented toward reading, writing, arithmetic, and studying the primer and Bible; less fortunate children might attend charity schools where they learned the “three Rs,” recited religious hymns (which was less demanding than reading the Bible), and learned vocational skills.

**Latin Grammar Schools.** At the secondary level, upper-class boys attended Latin grammar schools, first established in Boston in 1635, as preparation for college. These schools catered to those who planned to enter the professions (medicine, law, teaching, and the ministry) or become business owners or merchants. A boy would enter a Latin grammar school at age eight or nine and remain for eight years. His curriculum focused on the classics. “There were some courses in Greek, rhetoric, . . . and logic, but Latin was apparently three-quarters of the curriculum in most of the grammar schools, or more.” The other arts and sciences received little or no attention. “The religious atmosphere was quite as evident . . . as it was in the elementary school,” with the “master praying regularly with his pupils” and quizzing them “thoroughly on the sermons.” The regimen of study was exhausting and unexciting, and the school served the church. As Samuel Morrison reminds us, the Latin grammar school was one of colonial America’s closest links to European schools. Its curriculum resembled the classical humanist curriculum of the Renaissance (when schools were intended primarily for upper-class children and their role was to support the era’s religious and social institutions).
Academies. Established in 1751, the academy was the second American institution to provide education. Based on Benjamin Franklin’s ideas and intended to offer a practical curriculum for those not going to college, it had a diversified curriculum of English grammar, classics, composition, rhetoric, and public speaking. Latin was no longer considered a crucial subject. Students could choose a foreign language based on their vocational needs. For example, a prospective clergyman could study Latin or Greek, and a future businessman could learn French, German, or Spanish. Mathematics was taught for its professional uses rather than as an abstract intellectual exercise. History, not religion, was the chief ethical study. The academy also introduced many practical and manual skills into the formal curriculum: carpentry, engraving, printing, painting, cabinet making, farming, bookkeeping, and so on. These skills formed the basis of vocational curriculum in the twentieth century.

Colleges. Most students who graduated from Latin grammar schools went to Harvard or Yale University. College was based on the Puritan view that ministers needed to be soundly educated in the classics and scriptures. The students had to demonstrate competency in Latin and Greek and the classics. As is the case today, secondary education prepared students for college. Ellwood Cubberley writes, “The student would be admitted into college ‘upon Examination’ whereby he could show competency ‘to Read, Constrate, Parce Tully, Vergil and the Greek Testament; and to write Latin in Prose and to understand the Rules of Prosodia and Common Arithmetic’ as well as to bring ‘testimony of his blameless and inoffensive life.’”

The Harvard/Yale curriculum consisted of courses in Latin, grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, astronomy, ethics, metaphysics, and natural sciences. The curriculum for the ministry or other professions also included Greek, Hebrew, and ancient history.

Old Textbooks, Old Readers

The hornbook, primer, Westminster Catechism, Old Testament, and Bible were considered textbooks. Until the American Revolution, most elementary textbooks were of English origin or directly imitated English textbooks. Children learned the alphabet, the Lord’s Prayer, and some syllables, words, and sentences by memorizing the hornbook, a paddle-shaped board to which was attached a sheet of parchment covered with a transparent sheath made from flattened cattle horns.

When the New England Primer was published in 1690s, it replaced the English primer. The first American basal reader, it would remain the most widely used textbook in the colonies for more than 100 years; more than 3 million copies were sold. Religious and moral doctrines permeated the New England Primer. The somber caste of Puritan religion and morals was evident as students memorized sermons and learned their ABCs through rote and drill:

A—In Adam's Fall
   We sinned all

B—Thy Life to mend
   This book attend
C—the Cat doth play
        And after slay . .

Z—Zacheus he
        Did climb the tree
        His Lord to see.14

In 1740, Thomas Dilworth published a *New Guide to the English Tongue*, which combined grammar, spelling, and religious instruction. It was followed a few years later by *The School Master’s Assistant*, a widely used mathematics text.

Years later Noah Webster, an ardent cultural nationalist, wrote a letter to Henry Barnard (then Connecticut’s Commissioner of Education) in which he described the narrowness of the elementary curriculum and the limited use of textbooks:

before the Revolution . . . the books used were chiefly or wholly Dilworth’s Spelling Books, the Psalter, Testament, and Bible. No geography was studied before the publication of Dr. Morse’s small books on that subject, about the year 1786 or 1787. No history was read, as far as my knowledge extends, for there was no abridged history of the United States. Except the books above mentioned, no book for reading was used before the publication of the Third Part of my Institute, in 1785 . . . The introduction of my Spelling Book, first published in 1783, produced a great change in the department of spelling . . . No English grammar was generally taught in common schools when I was young, except that in Dilworth, and that to no good purpose.15

The National Period: 1776–1850

A new mission for education, which began to emerge during the Revolutionary period, continued throughout the early national period. Many leaders began to link free public schooling with the ideas of popular government and political freedom. President Madison wrote, “A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both.” Thomas Jefferson expressed a similar belief when he asserted, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.”

Life, liberty, and equality were emphasized in the era’s great documents: the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the 1785 Northwest Ordinances (which divided the Northwest Territory into townships and reserved the sixteenth section of “every township for the maintenance of public schools”). The ordinances reaffirmed that “schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged” by the states. The federal government thus committed to advancing education while assuring the constitutionally guaranteed autonomy of state and local schools. As a result of these ordinances, the federal government gave states more than 154 million acres of land for schools.16
By 1800, secular forces had sufficiently developed to challenge and ultimately reduce religious influence over elementary and secondary schools. These secular forces included the development of democracy, the development of a strong federal government, emerging cultural nationalism, the idea of religious freedom, and new discoveries in the natural sciences.

Rush: Science, Progress, and Free Education

Dr. Benjamin Rush (1745–1813) represented this new era. In 1791, he wrote that the emphasis on the classics prejudiced the masses against institutions of learning. As long as Latin and Greek dominated the curriculum, universal education beyond the rudiments was wishful thinking. Education should advance democracy and the exploration and development of natural resources. “To spend four or five years in learning two dead languages, is to turn our backs upon a gold mine, in order to amuse ourselves catching butterflies.” If the time spent on Latin and Greek was devoted to science, this champion pragmatist continued, “the human condition would be much improved.”

Rush outlined a plan of education for Pennsylvania and the new nation: free elementary schools in every township consisting of 100 or more families, a free academy at the county level, and free colleges and universities at the state level for society’s future leaders. Tax dollars would pay for the expenses, but the educational system ultimately would reduce taxes because a productive, well-managed workforce and entrepreneur force would result. (Thirty years later Horace Mann would make the same argument when he spearheaded the common school movement.) Rush’s curriculum emphasized reading, writing, and arithmetic at the elementary school level; English, German, the arts, and especially the sciences at the secondary and college level; and good manners and moral principles at all levels.

Jefferson: Education for Citizenship

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) had faith in agrarian society and distrusted the urban proletariat. A man of wide-ranging interests that included politics, architecture, agriculture, science, art, and education, Jefferson believed that the state must educate its citizenry to ensure a democratic society. In “A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge,” introduced in the Virginia legislature in 1779, Jefferson advocated a plan that provided educational opportunities for both common people and landed gentry “at the expense of all.” To Jefferson, formal education should not be restricted to particular religious or upper-class groups. Public taxes should finance schools. Jefferson’s plan divided Virginia’s counties into wards, each of which would have a free elementary school for the teaching of reading, writing, arithmetic, and history. The plan also provided for the establishment of 20 secondary-level grammar schools to which poor but gifted students could receive scholarships. The students in these 20 schools would study Latin, Greek, English, geography, and higher mathematics. On completing grammar school, half the scholarship students would receive positions as elementary or ward school teachers. The 10 scholarship students of highest achievement would attend William
and Mary College. Jefferson’s plan promoted continuing education for the brightest students as well as equal opportunity for economically disadvantaged students.

Neither Jefferson’s proposal for Virginia nor Rush’s proposal for Pennsylvania was enacted. Nonetheless, the bills indicate educational theorizing characteristic of the young nation. Coupled with Franklin’s academy, and its practical curriculum based on business and commercial principles rather than classical and religious principles, these bills promoted education aimed at good citizenship and social progress. Rush, Jefferson, and, to lesser extent, Franklin proposed universal education and methods for identifying students of superior ability, who were to receive free secondary and college educations at public expense.

Webster: Schoolmaster and Cultural Nationalist

The United States differed from most new countries struggling for identity in that it lacked a shared cultural identity and national literature. In its struggle against the “older” cultures and “older” ideas, the new nation went to great lengths to differentiate itself from England.19 Noah Webster (1758–1843) urged Americans to “unshackle [their] minds and act like independent beings. You have been children long enough, subject to the control and subservient to the interests of a haughty parent. . . . You have an empire to raise . . . and a national character to establish and extend by your wisdom and judgment.”20

In 1789, when the Constitution became the law of the land, Webster argued that the United States should have its own system of “language as well as government.” Great Britain’s language, he argued, “should no longer be our standard; for the taste of her writers is already completed, and her language on the decline.”21 By the act of revolution, the American people had declared their political independence from England. Now they needed to declare their cultural independence as well.

Realizing that a distinctive national language and literature conveyed a sense of national identity, Webster set out to reshape U.S. English. He believed that a uniquely U.S. language would (1) eliminate the remains of European usage, (2) create a uniform U.S. speech free of localism and provincialism, and (3) promote U.S. cultural nationalism.22 A U.S. language would unite citizens. However, such a language would have to be phonetically simple to render it suitable to the common people. As children learned the U.S. language, they also would learn to think and act as Americans. Because the books read by students would shape the curriculum of U.S. schools, Webster spent much of his life writing spelling and reading books. His Grammatical Institute of the English Language was published in 1783. The first part of the Institute was later printed as The American Spelling Book, which was widely used throughout the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century.23 Webster’s Spelling Book went through many editions; it is estimated that 15 million copies had been sold by 1837. Webster’s great work was The American Dictionary, which was completed in 1825 after 25 years of laborious research.24 Often termed the “schoolmaster of the Republic,” Webster helped create a sense of U.S. language, identity, and nationality.
McGuffey: The Readers and American Virtues

William Holmes McGuffey (1800–1873), who taught most of his life in Ohio colleges, also entered the debate on U.S. cultural nationalism. His Readers were the most popular textbooks in the United States during his era. (An estimated 120 million copies were sold between 1836 and 1920.) McGuffey gratefully acknowledged U.S. “obligations to Europe and the descendants of the English stock” in science, art, law, literature, and manners. However, the United States had made its own contributions to humankind; they “were not literary or cultural, but moral and political.” The seeds of popular liberty “first germinated from our English ancestors, but it shot up to its fullest heights in our land.” The United States had shown Europe that “popular institutions, founded on equality and the principle of representation, are capable of maintaining governments,” that it was practical to elevate the masses “to the great right and great duty of self-government.”

McGuffey’s Readers extolled patriotism, heroism, hard work, diligence, and virtuous living. Their tone was moralistic, religious, capitalistic, and nationalistic. The selections of American literature included orations by George Washington, Patrick Henry, Benjamin Franklin, and Daniel Webster. Through his Readers, McGuffey taught several generations of Americans. He also provided the first graded Readers for U.S. schools and paved the way for a graded system, which began in 1840. Along with his Pictorial Primer, many of his Readers are even used today in some rural, conservative, and/or Fundamentalist schools. See Curriculum Tips 3.1.

CURRICULUM TIPS 3.1

The Need for Historical Perspective

All professional educators, including curriculum specialists, need an understanding of history to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and to also better prepare for the future.

1. The development of ideas in education is part of our intellectual and cultural heritage.
2. A truly educated person has a sense of historical context.
3. An understanding of various theories and practices in education requires an understanding of historical foundations.
4. An understanding of historical foundations in education helps us integrate curriculum, instruction, and teaching.
5. History illuminates current pedagogical practices.
6. In developing a common or core curriculum, a historical perspective is essential.
7. With a historical perspective, curriculum specialists can better understand the relationship between content and process in subject areas.
8. References to history, especially case examples, contribute to academic education’s moral dimension.
9. The history of education permits practitioners to understand relationships between what students of the past learned and what students now learn.
10. The study of education history is important for the purposes of education theory and research.
Nineteenth-Century European Educators

Although widely criticized, European thought greatly influenced U.S. education. At the college level, German educators influenced the fields of natural science, psychology, and sociology; many of our research-oriented universities were based on the German model. At the K–12 level, progressive ideas from German and Swiss thinkers led to curricular and instructional methods that were psychologically oriented and considered students' needs and interests. English models of schooling also affected U.S. education.

The theme of reform characterized much of the era's educational discourse. The limitations of the "traditional curriculum and typical school of this era were recognized by educational leaders in Europe and America, and many of the features that were now firmly established in [curriculum] theory and practice can be traced to the ideas of the men and women who were ahead of their time." The traditional curriculum, which emphasized Latin, Greek, and the classics, became less popular. New pedagogical practices replaced rote learning, memorization, and corporal punishment.

Pestalozzi: General and Special Methods

Early U.S. education was strongly influenced by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), a Swiss educator. According to one educational historian, Pestalozzi "laid the basis for the modern elementary school and helped to reform elementary-school practice." Pestalozzi maintained that education should be based on the child's natural development. His basic pedagogical innovation was his insistence that children learn through the senses. He deplored rote learning and advocated linking the curriculum to children's home experiences.

Pestalozzi proposed a "general" method and a "special" method. The general method called for educators who would provide children with emotional security and affection. The special method considered children's auditory and visual senses. Pestalozzi devised the "object" lesson, in which children studied common objects, such as plants, rocks, and household objects. Children would determine an object's form, then draw the object, then name it. From these lessons in form, number, and sound came more formal instruction in the "three Rs."

William McClure and Joseph Neef, and later Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, worked to introduce Pestalozzi's ideas into U.S. schools. Pestalozzi's basic concepts of education became part of progressive schooling and later appeared in the movement for curriculum relevance and humanistic curriculum.

Froebel: The Kindergarten Movement

Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), a German educator, developed what he called "kindergarten" (children's garden). He focused on the three- and four-year-old children and believed that their schooling should be organized around play and individual and group interests and activities. Froebel encouraged a child-centered curriculum based (like Pestalozzi's) on love, trust, and freedom. Songs,
stories, colorful materials, and games were part of the formal curriculum. The children could manipulate objects (spheres, cubes, and circles), shape and construct materials (clay, sand, cardboard), and engage in playful activities (build castles and mountains, run, and otherwise exercise).\(^{31}\)

Together these activities were to comprise the learning environment and provide a secure and pleasant place where children could grow naturally. German immigrants brought the kindergarten concept to the United States. Margaret Schurz established the first U.S. kindergarten in Watertown, Wisconsin, in 1855. William Harris, superintendent of schools in St. Louis, Missouri, and later U.S. Commissioner of Education, was instrumental in implementing the idea on a broader scale. Kindergarten is now an established part of U.S. education. Many of Froebel’s ideas of childhood experiences and methods of play have been incorporated into current theories of early childhood education and progressive schooling.

**Herbart: Moral and Intellectual Development**

German philosopher Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841) maintained that education should be primarily moral and that the traditional curriculum was too rigid and limited. He advocated curriculum that gave people diversified interests and a balanced perspective on life. Herbart specified two major bodies of subject matter: knowledge interests and ethical interests. Knowledge interests involved empirical data, facts, and theories; ethical interests involved personal convictions, benevolence, and regard for justice, equality, and others’ welfare. Herbart wanted history, English, mathematics, and science integrated into all stages and grade levels of the curriculum. He introduced the idea of correlation of all subjects, an idea that influenced curriculum specialists who favored a core curriculum in the 1940s and 1950s.

Herbart saw learning as a psychological process in which the teacher addresses students’ needs and interests. The process involved the following:

1. **Preparation:** The teacher considers students’ previous learning experiences and stimulates readiness.
2. **Presentation:** The new lesson is introduced.
3. **Association:** The new lesson is related to ideas or materials previously studied.
4. **Systemization:** The learner masters new rules, principles, or generalizations.
5. **Application:** The new ideas are tested and applied to pertinent problems or activities.\(^{32}\)

Speaking of Herbart’s contribution to instruction, John Dewey said, “Few attempts have been made to formulate a method, resting on general principles, of conducting a recitation. One of these is of great importance, and has probably had more influence upon the learning of lessons than all others put together; namely, the analysis by Herbart of a recitation into five successive steps.”\(^{33}\) Classroom teachers adopted Herbart’s formal steps of instruction, which also were applied to teacher training. Teachers were asked to prepare their lessons by thinking of five questions: What do my students know? What questions should I ask? What events should I relate? What conclusions should be reached? How can students apply what they
have learned? Herbart’s instructional principles influenced the teaching–learning principles Dewey expressed in *How We Think*. They still serve as guidelines for teachers who use the developmental lesson approach.

**Spencer: Utilitarian and Scientific Education**

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was an English social scientist who based his ideas of education on Charles Darwin’s theory of biological evolution (introducing the notion of “survival of the fittest”). Spencer maintained that simple societies evolve to more complex social systems, characterized by an increased variety of specialized professions and occupations.34 Because of nature’s laws, only intelligent and productive populations adapt to environmental changes. Less intelligent, weak, or lazy people slowly disappear. Spencer’s notions of excellence, social-economic progress, and intellectual development based on heredity had immense implications for education and economic outcomes.

Spencer criticized religious doctrines and classical subject matter as unscientific and unrelated to contemporary society. He advocated a scientific, practical curriculum suited to industrialized society. Spencer believed that traditional schools were impractical and ornamental, a luxury for the upper class that failed to meet the needs of the people living in a modern society.

Spencer constructed a curriculum aimed at advancing human survival and progress. His curriculum included activities that (in order of importance) sustain life: enhance life; aid in rearing children; maintain one’s social and political relations; and foster leisure, tasks, and feelings.35

In his famous essay “What Knowledge Is of Most Worth?” Spencer argued that science was the most practical subject for the survival of the individual and society, yet it occupied minimal space in the curriculum. Spencer maintained that students should be taught how to think, not what to think.36 Spencer’s notion about discovery learning (an offshoot of scientific reasoning) also influenced twentieth-century curricularists, both Deweyite progressive educators and later academic disciplinary educators.

Although many of Spencer’s ideas about religion, evolution, and social progress created a furor (and still do among some religious and political observers), the ideas suited Spencer’s era, which was characterized by industrial growth and territorial expansion by Europe and the United States.

**The Rise of Universal Education: 1820–1920**

During the early 1800s, the United States expanded westward. Life on the new frontier deepened America’s faith in the common person who built the new nation. Equality and rugged individualism were important concepts, expressed in the Declaration of Independence, and reaffirmed by Westerners, who believed all people of all classes were important. This kind of faith in the working person and in American civilization underscores the frontier people the necessity of school.37 In the urban East, the lower classes, particularly immigrants, also valued free schooling and linked it to social mobility and the American dream. The upper-class
establishment may not have had faith in the masses, but they reluctantly accepted the argument (of Jefferson, Rush, and now Mann) that mass education was necessary for intelligent participation in a political democracy and for economic growth of the country.

**Monitorial Schools**

The monitorial school was a European invention based on Joseph Lancaster's model of education. It spread quickly to the U.S. urban centers, where the immigrant population was increasing, and to the frontier, where there was need for a system of schools. Its attraction in the 1820s and the following decades was its economy and efficiency. Bright student monitors served as instructors. The teacher taught the lesson to the monitors (high-achieving students), who presented the material to their classmates. The instruction was highly structured and based on rote learning and drilling the "three Rs."

Proponents of monitorial teaching stressed that it was economical and kept students busy while the teacher was occupied with other students. The class was divided into smaller groups, with a monitor in charge of each group. The students were kept actively involved in practice and drill activities and moved at their own pace. Teachers were freed from some of their instructional chores. The monitorial system was considered "efficient."

The monitorial system deemphasized classical education and religious theory, stressed the "three Rs" and good citizenship, demonstrated the possibility of systematic instruction, acquainted many people with formal education, and made educational opportunities more widely available. Most importantly, it promoted mass education and tax-supported elementary schools. At the peak of its popularity, in the 1840s, it was introduced in some high schools and suggested (by educators and state agencies) for colleges.

But many people considered the monitorial system too mechanical. It also was criticized for using poorly informed students as instructors. By 1850, its popularity had waned.

**Common Schools**

The common school was established in 1826 in Massachusetts, when the state passed a law requiring every town to choose a school board to be responsible for all local schools. Eleven years later the Massachusetts legislature created the first state board of education, and Massachusetts organized the public common schools under a single authority. Connecticut quickly followed its neighbor's example. The common schools were devoted to elementary education, with an emphasis on the "three Rs." Horace Mann spearheaded the movement, which was rooted in progressive thought.

As a member of the Massachusetts legislature and later as Massachusetts' first Commissioner of Education, Mann rallied public support for the common school by appealing to various segments of the population. To enlist the business community, he argued that "education has a market value" with a yield similar to "common
bullion." Industry's aim and the nation's wealth would be augmented "in proportion to the diffusion of knowledge."41 Workers would be more diligent and productive. Mann also established a stewardship theory, aimed at the upper class, that the public good would be enhanced by public education. Universal education would create a stable society in which people would obey the laws and increase the nation's political and economic well-being. Mann told workers and farmers that the common school would be a great equalizer, a means of social mobility for their children. To the Protestant community, he argued that the common school would assimilate ethnic and religious groups, promote a common culture, and help immigrant children learn English, U.S. customs, and U.S. laws.42 Mann was convinced that the common school was crucial to equal opportunity and a national identity.

The pattern for establishing common schools, and their quality, varied among the states, but the foundation of the U.S. public school was being forged. Schools taught youngsters of all socioeconomic and religious backgrounds, from age 6 to 14 or 15. Because individual teachers taught a variety of subjects to children of all ages, they had to plan as many as 10 to 20 different lessons a day.43 Teachers also had to try to keep their schoolrooms cool in the summer and warm in the winter (a responsibility shared by the older boys, who cut and fetched wood). Schoolhouses often needed major repairs, and teachers were paid miserably low salaries.

New England state legislatures encouraged the establishment of school districts, elected school boards, and enacted laws to govern the schools. Though the common school had problems and critics, it especially flourished on the frontier, where the local one-room schoolhouse embodied the pioneers' desire to provide free education for their children. The one-room schoolhouse eventually led to one of America's most lasting, sentimentalized pictures—the "Little Red Schoolhouse" in almost every community. "It was a manifestation of the belief held by most of the frontier leaders that a school was necessary to raise the level of American civilization."44

This small school, meager in outlook, and thwarted by inadequate funding and insufficient teachers, nevertheless fit with the conditions of the American frontier. It was a "blah" school, according to Abe Lincoln, but it was the kind of school in which the common person's children—even those born in log cabins—could begin their "readin," "writin," and "cipherin."45 It was a school local citizens could use as a polling place, meeting hall, and site for dances and other community activities; it was here on the frontier that neighborhood schools, local control, and government support of schools took a firm hold.

Elementary Schools

There was no consensus regarding an appropriate elementary-school curriculum. Throughout the 1800s, the trend was to add courses to the essential subjects of reading, spelling, grammar, and arithmetic. Religious doctrine changed to "manners" and "moral" instruction by 1825. Textbook content was heavily moralistic and teachers provided extensive training in character building. By 1875, lessons in morality were replaced by lessons in "conduct," which remained part of the twentieth-century curriculum. More and more subjects were added to the curriculum: geography and history
by 1850; science, visual art, and physical education by 1875; and nature study (biology and zoology), music, home making (later called "home economics"), and manual training by 1900. Table 3.1 shows this evolution of the elementary-school curriculum.

Secondary Schools

The common school created the basis for tax-supported, locally controlled elementary-school education. The U.S. high school was established on this base. By 1900, most children aged 6 to 13 were enrolled in public elementary school, but only 11.5 percent of children aged 14 to 17 were enrolled in public secondary schools (and only 6.5 percent graduated). As shown in Table 3.2, not until 1930 did the secondary-school enrollment figure exceed 50 percent. By 1970, 98 percent of elementary-aged children attended school, and 94 percent of secondary-aged children did (with 75 percent graduating). The great enrollment boom occurred between 1850 and 1900 for elementary schools and between 1900 and 1970 for high schools. From the 1980s to 2000, enrollment percentages leveled off in the mid- to high ninety percent.

**TABLE 3.1** EVOLUTION OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM, 1800–1900

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>1800</th>
<th>1825</th>
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<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arithmetic</strong></td>
<td>Mental arithmetic</td>
<td>Primary arithmetic</td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catechism</strong></td>
<td>Good behavior</td>
<td>Conduct</td>
<td>Conduct</td>
<td>Conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bible</strong></td>
<td>Manners and morals</td>
<td>Manners</td>
<td>Primary arithmetic</td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Conduct</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>U.S. history</td>
<td>History studies</td>
<td>History studies</td>
<td>History studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Object lessons</strong></td>
<td>Object lessons</td>
<td>Elementary science</td>
<td>Nature study</td>
<td>Nature study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Physical training</td>
<td>Physical training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical exercises</strong></td>
<td>Physical exercises</td>
<td>Physical training</td>
<td>Physical training</td>
<td>Physical training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Note the most important subjects.
TABLE 3.2  PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SECONDARY SCHOOL AND COLLEGE, 1900–2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>14-TO 17-YEAR-OLDS ENROLLED IN SECONDARY SCHOOL</th>
<th>17-YEAR-OLDS GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL</th>
<th>18-TO 21-YEAR-OLDS ENROLLED IN COLLEGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>97.9</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Academies

In the early 1800s, the academy began to replace the Latin grammar school; by 1850, it dominated. The academy offered a wide range of curricula; it was designed to provide a practical program for terminal students as well as a college preparatory course of study. By 1855, more than 6,000 academies were teaching 263,000 students—more than two-thirds of the period’s total secondary-school enrollment.

According to Ellwood Cubberley, the academy taught “useful things,” especially “subjects of modern nature,” that prepared students for life, not just college. By 1828, the academies of the state of New York offered as many as 50 different subjects. In rank order, the top 15 were Latin, Greek, English grammar, geography, arithmetic, algebra, composition and declamation, natural philosophy, rhetoric, philosophy, U.S. history, French, chemistry, logic, and astronomy. By 1837, the state Board of Regents reported 72 different subjects.

Academies tended to offer a traditional curriculum that prepared students for college. Elmer Brown writes that in the best academies “the college preparatory course was the backbone of the whole system of instruction.” Although practical courses were offered, “it was the admission requirements of the colleges, more than anything else, that determined their standards of scholarship.” Paul Monroe concurs: “The core of academy education yet remained the old classical curriculum . . . just as the core of the student body in the more flourishing academies remained the group preparing for college.”
The era of the academies extended to the 1870s, when public high schools replaced academies. The academies then served as finishing schools for young ladies, providing courses in classical and modern languages, science, mathematics, art, music, and homemaking. They also offered the "normal" program for prospective school teachers, which combined courses in the classics with principles of pedagogy. A few private military and elite academic academies still exist today.

High Schools

Although a few high schools existed in the early 1800s (the first was founded in Boston in 1821), they did not become a major U.S. institution until after 1874, when the Michigan Supreme Court ruled, in the "Kalamazoo Case," that the public could establish and support high schools with tax funds. Thereafter, high schools rapidly spread, and state after state made attendance compulsory.

Students were permitted to attend private schools, but the states had the right to establish minimum standards for all. By 1890, the 2,525 public high schools in the United States had more than 200,000 students, compared to 1,600 private secondary schools, which had fewer than 95,000 students. By 1900, the number of high schools had soared to 6,000, while the number of academies had declined to 1,200.51 The public high school system, contiguous with common schools, had evolved. As late as 1900 high schools were attended by only a small percentage of the total youth population. However, the presence of terminal, college preparatory, rich, and poor students under one roof showed that the U.S. public had rejected the European dual system of secondary education. Fifty years later, when the U.S. high school had fully evolved, James Conant argued for comprehensive high schools that served all types of learners and helped eliminate class distinctions. The comprehensive high school provided curriculum options for all students.

High schools stressed the college preparatory program, but they also completed the formal education of terminal students. They offered a more diversified curriculum than the academies. Around 1900, high schools began to offer vocational, industrial, commercial, and clerical courses. Public high schools contributed to social and political reform. They produced a skilled workforce for an expanding industrial economy, and they assimilated and Americanized millions of immigrant children in U.S. cities.

Summing up, then, the curriculum of the Latin grammar school was virtually the same at the beginning and end of the colonial period. Table 3.3 lists the most popular courses. Latin, Greek, arithmetic, and the classics were stressed. Academies introduced greater variation (e.g., courses for practical studies) into the curriculum. By 1800, a typical academy offered about 25 different subjects (the table lists the 17 most popular). Between 1850 and 1875, the peak period for academies, some academies offered as many as 150 courses.52 In rank order, the 15 most popular were (1) algebra, (2) higher arithmetic, (3) English grammar, (4) Latin, (5) geometry, (6) U.S. history, (7) physiology, (8) natural philosophy, (9) physical geography, (10) German, (11) general history, (12) rhetoric, (13) bookkeeping, (14) French, and (15) zoology.53 There was no real philosophy or aim to these courses, except that most were college preparatory in nature, even though the original aim of the academy was to offer a practical program.
### TABLE 3.3 EVOLUTION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM, 1800–1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1800–1825</th>
<th>1825–1850</th>
<th>1850–1875</th>
<th>1875–1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latin Grammar School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Latin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Greek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>Classical literature</td>
<td>Ancient history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical literature</td>
<td>Classical literature</td>
<td>Classical literature</td>
<td>Classical literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academy and High School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Latin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Greek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical literature</td>
<td>Classical literature</td>
<td>Classical literature</td>
<td>Classical literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometry</td>
<td>Geometry</td>
<td>Geometry</td>
<td>Geometry</td>
<td>Geometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigonometry</td>
<td>Trigonometry</td>
<td>Trigonometry</td>
<td>Trigonometry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookkeeping</td>
<td>Bookkeeping</td>
<td>Bookkeeping</td>
<td>Bookkeeping</td>
<td>Bookkeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English grammar</td>
<td>English grammar</td>
<td>English grammar</td>
<td>English grammar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oratory</td>
<td>Oratory</td>
<td>Oratory</td>
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<td>Oratory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveying</td>
<td>Surveying</td>
<td>Surveying</td>
<td>Surveying</td>
<td>Surveying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astronomy</td>
<td>Astronomy</td>
<td>English grammar</td>
<td>Physical geography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>Foreign language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
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<td>Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek history</td>
<td>Greek history</td>
<td>Greek history</td>
<td>Greek history</td>
<td>Greek history</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* continued

Note: The table continues with additional subjects.
### TABLE 3.3 CONTINUED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1800–1825</th>
<th>1825–1850</th>
<th>1850–1875</th>
<th>1875–1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. history</td>
<td>U.S. history</td>
<td>U.S. history</td>
<td>Civil government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Political economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manual training*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Home economics*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Considered part of practical studies.

*All but disappeared; limited enrollments.

After 1875, the number of high schools rapidly grew, and the number of academies rapidly fell. The secondary courses listed in Table 3.3 for 1875–1900 were high school courses. The curriculum and the variety in course offerings continued to expand, presumably making it easier for students to determine their interests and capabilities. See Curriculum Tips 3.2.

### CURRICULUM TIPS 3.2

#### Process of Historical Research

The six suggestions below provide guidance for conducting historical research.

1. Define a problem or issue with roots in the past, or attempt to recreate a historical event and give it meaning.
2. Use primary source writings from the time of a historical event that relate to an event and were part of the context in which it occurred.
3. Use secondary sources (literature written after the event occurred) in which historians have interpreted the event.

4. Based on an examination of primary and secondary sources, recreate an event, life, or situation from the past and interpret it so that it has meaning for people today.

5. Use history, especially case examples or case studies, to add a moral dimension to your teaching.

6. Explain and interpret, but do not rewrite, history.

Source: Adapted from Gerald Gutek, unpublished materials, January 1992.
CHAPTER 3  •  Historical Foundations of Curriculum  •  81

The Transitional Period: 1893–1918

From the colonial period until the turn of the twentieth century, the traditional curriculum, which emphasized classical studies for college-bound students, dominated at the elementary and secondary levels. The rationale for this emphasis was that the classics were difficult and thus a good way to develop mental abilities.

More and more subjects were added to the curriculum. As a result, there was a growing need to bring some order and unity to curriculum, especially at the secondary level. According to two educators, the subjects taught, the time allotted to them, and their "grade placements" differed from school to school.55

As late as 1900, most children completed their formal education at the elementary level, and those who went on to secondary schools usually ended their formal education upon graduation. As of 1890, only 14.5 percent of high school students were preparing for college, and less than 3 percent went on to college.56 Hence, schools were catering to approximately 15 percent of students, those bound for college.

Reformers began to ask if elementary schools should offer two curriculum tracks: one for children bound for high school and one for children whose formal education would end at the elementary level. They also began to question high schools' focus on preparing students for college, on mental discipline, and on the classics.

Reaffirming the Traditional Curriculum: Three Committees

With these unsettled questions as background, the National Education Association (NEA) organized three major committees between 1893 and 1895: the Committee of Fifteen on Elementary Education, the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies, and the Committee on College Entrance Requirements. These committees were to determine schools' curricula. Their reports "standardized" the curriculum for much of the twentieth century. In Cubberley's words, "The committees were dominated by subject-matter specialists, possessed of a profound faith in mental discipline." No concern for student "abilities, social needs, interest, or capabilities...found a place in their...deliberations."57

The Committee of Fifteen. The Committee of Fifteen was heavily influenced by Harvard University president Charles Eliot, who had initiated vigorous discussion on the need for school reform, and by William Harris, then the U.S. Commissioner of Education, who believed in strict teacher authority and discipline. Both Eliot and Harris wanted the traditional curriculum to remain intact. The committee adopted Eliot's plan to reduce the elementary grades from ten to eight and stressed the "three Rs," English grammar, literature, geography, and history. Hygiene, culture, vocal music, and drawing were each allotted one hour per week. Manual training, sewing cooking, algebra, and Latin were introduced into the seventh and eighth grades.

In general, the committee rejected the idea of newer subjects (see Table 3.1 on p. 79), the pedagogical principles that had characterized the reform movement of
the European pioneers since the early 1800s, kindergarten, the idea that children's needs and interests should be considered when planning the curriculum, and the notion of interdisciplinary subjects. They compartmentalized subject matter, and this compartmentalization has remained the norm.

The Committee of Ten. Chaired by Eliot, the Committee of Ten was the most influential of the three committees. It identified nine academic subjects as central to the high school curriculum: (1) Latin, (2) Greek, (3) English, (4) other modern languages, (5) mathematics (algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and higher or advanced algebra), (6) physical sciences (physics, astronomy, and chemistry), (7) natural history or biological sciences (biology, botany, zoology, and physiology), (8) social sciences (history, civil government, and political economy), and (9) geography, geology, and meteorology. (See Table 3.4.)

The committee recommended four different tracks: (1) classical, (2) Latin scientific, (3) modern languages, and (4) English. The first two required four years of Latin. The first program emphasized classic English literature and math; the second, math and science. The modern language program required four years of French or German (Spanish was considered too easy and culturally and linguistically less important). The English program permitted four years of Latin, German, or French. The modern language and English programs also included literature, composition, and history. The Committee of Ten considered these two programs (which did not require Latin or emphasize literature, science, or mathematics), "in practice distinctly inferior to the other two." In taking this position, the committee indirectly tracked college-bound students into the first two programs and non-college-bound students into the latter two programs. To some extent, this bias reflected the committee's composition: eight of the ten members represented college and private preparatory school interests.

The committee ignored art, music, physical education, and vocational education, maintaining that these subjects contributed little to mental discipline. Two curricularists have written, "The choice of these subjects and the omission of others from consideration was enough to set the course for secondary education for many years" and indirectly set the tone at the elementary level as well. The committee suggested that each of the nine subjects except Latin and Greek be taught at the elementary school level.

At the time, few students went to college. Nonetheless, this college preparatory program established a curriculum hierarchy, from elementary school to college, that promoted academics and ignored most students who were not college bound. Today, schools offer vocational, industrial, and/or technical programs, but the academic program is still considered superior to others.

The Committee on College Entrance Requirements. When the Committee on College Entrance Requirements met in 1895, it reaffirmed the dominance of college preparatory curriculum in high schools, emphasizing college admission requirements and classical subjects. Consisting mainly of college and university presidents, including Eliot, the committee recommended strengthening the college preparatory aspect of the high school curriculum, and made recommendations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST YEAR</th>
<th>SECOND YEAR</th>
<th>THIRD YEAR</th>
<th>FOURTH YEAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>5 p.*</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Literature</td>
<td>2 p.</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
<td>5 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Composition</td>
<td>2 p.</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German (or French)</td>
<td>5 p.</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
<td>5 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Italy, Spain, and France</td>
<td>3 p.</td>
<td>2 p.</td>
<td>2 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Geography (European political-continental and oceanic flora and fauna)</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English History to 1688</td>
<td>3 p.</td>
<td>3 p.</td>
<td>4 p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25 p.</td>
<td>33 p.</td>
<td>34 p.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*p. = periods.
regarding the number of credits required in different subjects for college admission. The recommendations were reflected in the Carnegie Unit, a method of evaluating credits for college admission, imposed on high schools in 1909 and still used in most high schools.

Harris and Eliot: Two Conservative Reformers

From 1878 (when the Kalamazoo court decision provided for free public high schools) to 1900, education questions revolved around curriculum: What should be taught in elementary and secondary schools? Should high school be considered an extension of elementary school? Should the curriculum differ at the two school levels or should it remain unbroken? Should the high schools be considered preparatory for college? If so, at what grade level should the secondary curriculum start college preparatory work? What curriculum provisions should be made for terminal students? If high schools offered two or more separate programs, would the result be a dual-track system? Should the same education be available to all students?

William Harris (1834–1926) and Charles Eliot (1835–1909) dominated the reform movement during this period: Harris, the former St. Louis Commissioner of Education (1868–1881) and U.S. Commissioner of Education (1889–1906), was a traditionalist who subscribed to McGuffey's moralism and Mann's faith in free public schools. Harris wrote in 1871, "If the rising generation does not grow up with democratic principles, the fault will lie in the system of popular education." He thought that U.S. common schools should teach morality and citizenship, "lift all classes of people into a participation in civilized life," and instill "social order." Whereas Mann saw the common school as a great equalizer and force for social mobility, Harris saw it as an instrument to preserve society's customs and norms. Mann saw schools as key to a child's growth and development, whereas Harris saw the school as one of many factors (e.g., family, playmates, church, and community) in educating and socializing children. Harris saw schools as an extension of society, not as agents of change.

Harris advocated a traditional curriculum: a mix of essentialism (five core academic areas) and perennialism (emphasis on the classics and moral values). Harris's elementary curriculum comprised mathematics, geography, history, grammar, literature, and art. Mann also advocated music and art.) At the high school level, Harris emphasized the classics, Greek and Latin, and mathematics. His curriculum was rigorously academic. Harris resisted the idea of a vocational or practical curriculum, arguing that all children should follow the same curriculum. The ideal was for each student to work with his mind, not with his hands.

Education historian Lawrence Cremin states that Harris "consolidated the revolution Mann had wrought" but was "patently conservative." Harris's emphasis was "on order rather than freedom, on work rather than play, on effort rather than interest, on prescription rather than election, on regularity [and] silence," and on preserving "the civil order." Harris stressed rules, scheduling, testing, and grading. Harris argued that maybe curriculum would give poor children the same opportunities as wealthy children. However, his focus on the classics discouraged working-class students from attending high school.
As president of Harvard University, Eliot played a prominent role in the shaping of higher education. He argued that, as late as the 1890s, 80 percent of U.S. colleges and universities had to organize their own preparatory high schools because public high schools were doing an inadequate job. Also, more than 80 percent of eligible youth did not attend high school. Eliot maintained that there was a huge discrepancy in purpose and quality "between the elementary schools and the colleges." Although the elementary schools served a larger segment of the population, their curriculum was characterized by repetitive drill in grammar, spelling, and basic math, at the expense of science, foreign languages, and advanced math.

The curriculum had to be revamped and pedagogical methods had to be changed from lock-step teaching, rote drill, and the memorization of facts to comprehension and problem solving. Eliot believed that elementary children were capable of pursuing subjects such as algebra, physics, and foreign languages. Sixty years later, in The Process of Education, Jerome Bruner similarly argued, "Any subject can be taught in some effectively honest form to any child at any stage of development." Unlike most educators of his time, Bruner held that students can comprehend the fundamental principles and concepts of any subject at almost any age if they're taught properly.

Eliot called on pedagogical experts to establish goals and standards for every subject, "even though not all children would study the same subjects or move at the same pace while studying them." To some extent, he allowed for different rates and ways of learning, what is now called "independent learning," "continuous progress," and/or "learning styles."

Eliot saw "civilized society" as comprising four layers: (1) the upper one, "thin" in numbers and consisting of "the managing, leading, guiding class—the intellectual discoverers, the inventors, the organizers, and the managers"; (2) a "much more numerous class, namely, the highly trained hand-workers" who function as "skilled manual labor"; (3) a populous "commercial class" consisting of those who engage in "buying, selling, and distributing"; and (4) a large class engaged in "household work, agriculture, mining, quarrying, and forestry." Schools, Eliot argued, must offer programs to all four classes. The more progressive and democratic reformers saw Eliot's class system as elitist and biased.

Eliot argued for vocational and trade schools separate from high schools. He also maintained that elementary school teachers should sort children into tracks according to their abilities (as European dual-track schools do).

Later Eliot somewhat retreated from that position, but measurement and school efficiency advocates picked up on the idea of "vocational guidance," based partly on testing, and advocated tracking secondary students into academic and nonacademic programs.

Vocational Education

In later years the NEA would support the concept of vocational education. A 1910 report by the NEA's Committee on the Place of Industries in Public Education advocated "manual activities" at the elementary level and "testing of children's aptitudes as a basis for subsequent choice of specific pursuits either in vocations or in higher schools" and "manual training" for some high school students."
In 1917 the Smith-Hughes Act provided federal aid for vocational education related to agriculture, home economics, and the trades. Federal funds were to match state monies allocated to school curricula in these three vocations. Business, labor, and farm groups hailed the act as a reform.\[^4\] They did not see the act as shunting lower-class children into second-rate, nonacademic programs. However, Jane Addams, and to a lesser extent Dewey and Kilpatrick, would see the promotion of vocational education as hindering the democratic common school movement. Addams was most concerned that immigrant children would be steered into such programs. Seventy-five years later, Michael Apple, Alfie Kohn, and Jeannie Oaks would similarly argue that working-class students were being placed in nonacademic vocational programs due to the class biases of middle-class educators.\[^2\]

Within two years the enrollment in vocational programs doubled. By 1918, 164,000 students were enrolled in such programs, the vast majority (118,000) in trade and industrial programs. By 1944 the total enrollment was 2.5 million, evenly distributed in agriculture, home economics, and trade and industry. By 1970, some 9 million students (26 percent of secondary students) were enrolled in vocational programs.\[^7\] By 2000, vocational education enrollment had declined to 20 percent,\[^7\] reflecting growing criticism of tracking students.

The shift from classical and academic high school courses in 1900 to the comprehensive high school with substantial enrollments in vocational education (and a lowering of the academic bar) has had major consequences. For one thing, vocational programs tend to be outdated. They rarely are relevant to a high-tech/information society that communicates and operates through verbal and mathematical symbols, computers, and electronic media. Given the growth of electronic and health-related industries, vocational education needs major revamping.

**Pressure for a Modern Curriculum**

Among other factors, immigration and industrial development led a growing number of educators to question the classical curriculum and its emphasis on mental discipline. The scientific movement in psychology and education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also played a role—particularly the pragmatic theories of Charles Peirce and William James; the social theories of Darwin, Herbart, and Spencer; and the pedagogical views of Pestalozzi, Froebel, Maria Montessori, and others. This movement rejected the mental discipline approach and classic curriculum and emphasized vocational, technical, and scientific subjects.

At the turn of the twentieth century, education was strongly influenced by the ideas of Dewey and Francis Parker, the Gestalt psychology and child psychology movements, the learning theories of behaviorism and transfer learning, and the progressive movement in schools and society.

Educators increasingly argued that the classics had no greater mental value than other subjects and that mental discipline (which emphasized rote learning, drill, and memorization) was not conducive to the inductive method of science or compatible with contemporary educational theory. Edward Thorndike, the era's most influential learning psychologist, wrote, "The expectation of any large difference in general
improvement of the mind from one study rather than another seems doomed to disappointment. The chief reason why good thinkers seem superficially to have been made such by having taken certain school studies is that good thinkers have taken such studies. . . . Now that good thinkers study Physics and Trigonometry, these seem to make good thinkers. If able pupils should all study Physical Education and Dramatic Art, these subjects would seem to make good thinkers.75

By 1917 Eliot, a former advocate of Latin, was saying that Latin should no longer be compulsory for high school or college students.76 Abraham Flexner (1866–1959), a former teacher of the classics, contended that Latin had “no purpose” in the curriculum and that the classics were out of step with scientific developments.77 Flexner now argued that tradition was an inadequate criterion for justifying subject matter; society was changing and educators had to also make changes in the curriculum.

Flexner: A Modern Curriculum. In his 1916 paper “A Modern School,” Flexner rejected the traditional secondary curriculum and proposed a “modern” curriculum consisting of four basic areas: (1) science (the curriculum’s major emphasis), (2) industry (occupations and trades of the industrial world), (3) civics (history, economics, and government), and (4) aesthetics (literature, languages, art, and music).78 Modern languages would replace Latin and Greek. Flexner concluded that a subject had little value in the curriculum unless a utilitarian argument could be made for its inclusion.

Flexner’s concept of utility and modern subjects tended to resemble Spencer’s views on science and subject matter. The difference is that Flexner was attuned to the social and political climate of his time. Educators were willing to listen to his proposals. In 1917, the Lincoln School of Teachers College, Columbia University (while Dewey was teaching) adopted Flexner’s proposed curriculum; the school combined the four core areas of study, with emphasis on scientific inquiry.

Dewey: Pragmatic and Scientific Principles of Education. The same year that Flexner published “A Modern School,” Dewey published Democracy and Education.79 In the book Dewey set forth the relationship between education and democracy as well as the notion that democracy itself was a social process that could be enhanced through the school. Dewey considered schools as neutral institutions that could serve the ends of either freedom or expression; thus, the aims of education went hand in hand with the particular type of society involved.

According to Dewey, subjects cannot be placed in a value hierarchy; study of any subject can promote a child’s development. Any study or body of knowledge was capable of expanding the child’s experiences and contributing to his social and cognitive growth. Traditional subjects such as Greek or Latin were no more valuable than music or art.

At the same time, Dewey prioritized science, which he saw as epitomizing rational inquiry. His emphasis on science led to his publication, How We Think.

Judd: Systematic Studies and Social Sciences. Charles Judd (1873–1946) was a colleague of Dewey. He headed the University of Chicago’s Department of
Education when Dewey directed the lab school. With Dewey and others, Judd constructed a science of education based on finding facts and constructing generalizations and then applying them in decision making and problem solving areas. Whereas Peirce and James referred to this method as pragmatism, Judd referred to it as "scientism in education."

Judd used statistical research (which was then in its infancy) to determine the worth of curriculum content—that is, the extent to which particular content enhanced students' ability to solve problems. By preparing students to deal with problems, not acquire or recall endless knowledge, he argued students would be prepared to deal with the changing world and the problems they would encounter as adults.

In *Introduction to the Scientific Study of Education*, Judd outlined "systematic studies . . . of the curriculum." He emphasized reading, writing, and spelling based on words statistically shown to be used by successful adults. He also emphasized math problems applicable of everyday life. Judd urged that elementary students be exposed to "career education" to help prepare them for an occupation. At the secondary level, Judd recommended practical subjects with a vocational or technical orientation. For slower students he advocated English, business math, mechanics or stenography, and office management. For average and superior students, he recommended science, mathematics, modern languages, and the social sciences.

Judd influenced the next generation of theorists, who sought to apply scientific methods to curriculum development. This generation (sometimes called "technicians") began with Franklin Bobbitt and Werrett Charters in the 1920s and ended with Ralph Tyler in the 1950s.

**Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education.** In 1918, the NEA's Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education published the highly progressive *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*. Influenced by Flexner's "A Modern School" and Dewey's *Democracy and Education*, the commission stressed the whole child (not only cognitive development); education for all youth (not only college-bound youth); diversified areas of study (not just classical or traditional studies); and common culture, ideas, and ideals for a democratic society (not religious, elitist, or mental-discipline learning).

The commission noted the following:

1. Education should promote seven aims: health, command of the fundamentals, "worthy home membership" (e.g., preparation for marriage, raising children, and so on), vocation, citizenship, leisure, and ethical character.
2. High school should be a comprehensive institution based on the nation's social and economic groups.
3. High school curricula should meet varied student needs—agricultural, business and commercial, vocational, and college preparatory.
4. Current educational psychology, psychological principles, and methods of measurement and evaluation should be applied to secondary curriculum and instruction.
5. U.S. educational institutions should function in conjunction with one another.
High schools were assuming their modern curricular patterns: combining academic programs with several nonacademic programs. English, math, science, social science, and modern languages were being emphasized. Classical languages and literature were losing ground. Aims and subjects were becoming interrelated. Utilitarianism was replacing the idea of mental discipline. Students' needs and interests were being considered. Schools were expected to serve all students, not only college-bound youth. Traditional education, which had long dominated U.S. education, was in decline.

The Field of Curriculum Is Born: 1918–1949

In the early 1900s, scientific methods of research, psychology, the child study movement, industrial efficiency, and the progressive movement in society all influenced education. Curriculum now was viewed as a science, with principles and methodology, not simply as content or subject matter. The idea of planning a curriculum, rather than simply describing it in terms of subjects and the time allotted to them, appeared in the literature.

Bobbitt and Charters: Behaviorism and Scientific Principles

The idea of efficiency, promoted by business and industry, influenced Franklin Bobbitt (1876–1956) and Charters (1875–1952). Frederick Taylor analyzed factory efficiency in time and motion studies and concluded that workers should be paid on the basis of their individual output, and his theories influenced Bobbitt and Charters. Efficient operation of schools became a major goal in the 1920s. Efficiency often entailed eliminating small classes, increasing the student–teacher ratio, reducing teachers' salaries, and so on, and then preparing charts and graphs to show the cost reduction. Raymond Callahan later branded this approach the "cult of efficiency." Curriculum making became more scientific; teaching and learning were reduced to measurable behaviors and outcomes.

Bobbitt's 1918 book The Curriculum was possibly the first devoted solely to curriculum as a science and to all of its phases. Bobbitt's principles of curriculum planning reflected an activities approach, "a series of things which children and youth must do and experience by way of developing abilities to do things well and make up the affairs of adult life." To Bobbitt, curriculum should outline the knowledge important for each subject and then develop appropriate activities. Bobbitt set out to organize a course of studies for the elementary grades: "We need principles of curriculum making."

Bobbitt further developed his activities approach in the early 1920s in How to Make a Curriculum, in which he outlined more than 800 objectives and related student activities. These activities ranged from personal health and hygiene, to spelling and grammar, "to keeping home appliances in good working condition."

Bobbitt's guidelines for selecting objectives can be applied today:

1. Eliminate objectives that are impractical or cannot be accomplished through normal living.
2. Eliminate objectives that are important for success and adult living.
3. Avoid objectives
opposed by the community, (4) involve the community in selecting objectives, 
(5) differentiate between objectives for all students and objectives for only some students, and (6) sequence objectives by grade level. Taken out of context, Bobbitt's list of hundreds of objectives and activities, along with the machine or factory analogy that he advocated, was easy to criticize. Nevertheless, Bobbitt's insistence that curriculum making was a specialty based on scientific methods and procedures was important for elevating curriculum to a field of study, or what he called a "new specialization."

Charters, too, advocated a behaviorist approach influenced by business notions of efficiency. He termed his approach "scientific." Charters viewed the curriculum as a series of goals that students must reach. In *Curriculum Construction*, he discussed curriculum in terms of specific operations, such as those involved in running a machine.  

Charters argued that curriculum makers must apply clear principles in order to select materials that would lead to the achievement of specific, measurable objectives. He felt the state of knowledge at that time did not permit scientific measurement that would specifically identify the outcome of the objectives, but he set out to develop a method for selecting objectives based on social consensus and for applying subject matter and student activities to analysis and verification. Although he did not use the term evaluation during this period, he was laying the groundwork for curriculum evaluation.

As initiators of the behavioral and scientific movements in curriculum, Bobbitt and Charters had a profound impact on curriculum. They (1) developed principles for curriculum making, involving aims, objectives, needs, and learning experiences (which they called activities); (2) highlighted the use of behavioral objectives; (3) introduced the ideas that objectives are derived from the study of needs (later called needs assessment) and that objectives and activities are subject to analysis and verification (later called evaluation); and (4) emphasized that curriculum making cuts across subject matter and that a curriculum specialist need not be a specialist in any subject but should be a professional in method or process.

Bobbitt and Charters taught at the University of Chicago when Ralph Tyler was a graduate student in the department of education (Tyler was a graduate assistant of Charters). Tyler was highly influenced by Bobbitt's and Charters's behaviorist ideas, particularly the ideas that (1) objectives derive from student needs and society, (2) learning experiences relate to objectives, (3) activities organized by the teacher should be integrated into the subject matter, and (4) instructional outcomes should be evaluated. Tyler's emphasis on evaluation as a component of curriculum derives from Charters, who helped Tyler get appointed Head of Testing and Evaluation at the Ohio State Bureau of Educational Research in 1929. (Charters had become the bureau's director in 1928.) Tyler's four major curriculum components (objectives, learning experiences, methods of organization, and evaluation) are rooted in Bobbitt's and especially Charters's ideas.

Kilpatrick: The Progressive Influence

The rise of progressive education and universal education led to a backlash against the classical curriculum's rigidity and rote memorization, the emphasis on tough subject matter, and a secondary curriculum standardized for preparation for
college. Progressive curricularists emphasized the learner rather than subject matter, and social processes rather than cognitive ones. The curriculum was organized around classroom and school social activities, group enterprises, and group projects. See Curriculum Tips 3.3.

Student self-expression and freedom were major goals. In the 1920s and 1930s, Dewey warned against teaching that lacks a plan and simply allows students to respond according to their interests.89

Kilpatrick, a colleague of Dewey at Teachers College, Columbia University, attempted to merge the behaviorist psychology of the day with Dewey’s and Judd’s progressive philosophy. The blend became known as the “Project Method”50 (later called purposeful activity). Kilpatrick divided his methodology into four steps: purposing, planning, executing, and judging. His curriculum projects ranged from classroom projects to school and community projects.

Two of Kilpatrick’s doctoral students applied his ideas in Missouri schools. One was Junius Merian, who called Kilpatrick’s projects “subjects of study” and organized them into four areas: observation, play, stories, and hard work.91 The second was Ellsworth Collings, who developed a curriculum around children’s

**CURRICULUM TIPS 3.3**

**Enriching the Curriculum**

The following suggestions combine Kilpatrick’s activities curriculum and Rugg’s child-centered curriculum. In general, the suggestions integrate elementary schooling with progressivist philosophy which evolved during the first half of the 1900s. They are especially suited to schools and teachers who stress a student-centered curriculum.

1. Study each child’s cumulative record.
2. Compare achievement scores with ability indices.
3. Examine a pupil’s creative output for frequently used words, symbols, and topics.
4. Listen to pupils talk about themselves.
5. Provide a choice of activities.
6. If possible, visit each pupil’s home.
7. Help individual pupils learn as much as possible about their values, attitudes, purposes, skills, interests, and abilities.
8. Allow pupils to say what they think.
9. Encourage students to reflect on their beliefs and values.
10. Together with pupils, analyze their interpretations of their in-class and out-of-class experiences.
11. Organize class activities around individual or group study of problems important to the individuals involved.
12. Help individual students state their immediate and long-term goals. Share with pupils the information available about their present situation.
13. Clarify with pupils a situation’s limitations (in time, materials, and resources).
14. Ask each pupil to formulate a plan of work.
15. Encourage each pupil to collect and share materials.
16. Arrange for students to collect information in out-of-class situations.
17. Use record-keeping to help individual students organize their learning.

real-life experiences. He urged teachers and students to present organized experiences or activities that were related and developmental in nature; one activity led to another. "The curriculum was continuously made 'on the spot' by the joint action of pupils and teachers." He believed that such a joint endeavor "would mean most for the children." His projects resembled Merian's four study areas but included more field trips and community activities.

Kilpatrick's project method, which he presented in his book *Foundations of Method*, was implemented mainly at the elementary level. Kilpatrick advocated giving children considerable input in determining the curriculum. Kilpatrick's project method became part of the activity movement. But he argued that the difference was that his doctrine had "social purpose," whereas the activity-centered curriculum had only "child purpose." When forced to decide who should plan the curriculum, the child or teacher, Kilpatrick opted for the child, arguing that "if you want to educate the boy to think and plan for himself, then let him make his own plan." In this respect, he differed from Dewey, who put more emphasis on the role of the teacher. In Kilpatrick's view, children had to learn to "search, . . . compare, . . . think why," and make their own decisions. Teachers should guide rather than disperse knowledge. When Kilpatrick's project method was eventually introduced into the high school curriculum, it was blended with social studies and the core curriculum.

Concerned with social issues and part of the radical progressive wing (later to be called reconstructionism), Kilpatrick saw traditional education as reactionary. Along with other progressives such as Boyd Bode, Hollis Caswell, George Counts, and Harold Rugg, he criticized the Committee of Ten, which he felt had legitimized traditional systems of education. The Committee of Ten urged a compartmentalized academic curriculum emphasizing Latin, language, and science. Kilpatrick argued for integrated subject matter and a general education emphasizing values and social issues. Whereas the Committee of Ten saw school as a place where students go primarily to acquire knowledge, Kilpatrick and his progressive colleagues saw school as a "community" in which students practiced "cooperation, self-government . . . and application of intelligence . . . to problems as they may arise."

The traditional practice of education focused on certain subjects, usually the "three Rs" at the elementary level and basic academic subjects at the secondary level. The basic teaching method was rote practice. In contrast, Kilpatrick and his followers saw education's purpose as the child's growth along social lines, not the mastery of content. The curriculum must derive from real-life experiences, not organized bodies of subject matter, and must take the form of purposeful activities. School was preparation for life; it had social purpose.

The Twenty-Sixth Yearbook

In 1930, the National Society for the Study of Education (NSSE), an honor society headquartered at the University of Chicago, published its twenty-sixth yearbook in two volumes: *Curriculum-Making: Past and Present* and *The Foundations of Curriculum Making*. The committee that developed the two volumes consisted of 12 members, including Rugg (the chairperson) and Bagley, Bobbitt, Charters, Counts, Judd, and Kilpatrick. Most of the period's leaders of curriculum development were
scientific-oriented and progressive. Many were affiliated with the University of Chicago, which emphasized this science of education.

The yearbook's first volume harshly criticized traditional education and its emphasis on subject matter, rote learning, drill, and mental discipline. It also offered a synthesis of progressive practices and programs in U.S. public and private schools. The second volume described the state of the art in curriculum making and outlined the ideal curriculum, which:

1. Focuses on human affairs of human life.
2. Deals with local, national, and international issues.
3. Enables students to think critically about various forms of government.
4. Fosters open-mindedness.
5. Considers students' interests and needs and provides opportunities for discussion and debate.
6. Deals with the issues of modern life and society's cultural and historical aspects.
7. Considers problem-solving activities and practice in choosing alternatives such as role playing, independent learning, and cooperative learning.
8. Organizes problems and exercises in a graded organization.
9. Deals with humanitarian themes in purposeful, constructive way.\(^{(99)}\)

Harold Rugg maintained that educational committees or legislative groups should formulate the curriculum's goals, materials, and instructional methods. Trained curriculum specialists should plan the curriculum and include (1) a statement of objectives, (2) a sequence of experiences [to achieve] the objectives, (3) subject matter found to be . . . the best means of engaging in the experiences, and (4) statements of immediate outcomes of achievements to be derived from the experiences.\(^{(100)}\) These four planning principles were later to become the basis of Tyler's four organizing principles delineated in Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction. Rugg concluded that curriculum was adapting scientific methods that were needed "for specialization and for professional training."\(^{(101)}\) Experienced teachers and curriculum specialists should work together to organize the content and materials within each subject area.

The NSSE yearbook greatly clarified problems that curriculum workers were encountering and significantly advanced curriculum making. It had major influence in many school districts (large and small, as well as city, suburban, and rural).

Rugg and Caswell: The Development Period

From the late 1920s through the early 1940s, a number of important books were published on curriculum principles and processes. Trained as an engineer, Harold Rugg (1886–1960) shared Bobbitt's and Charters's faith in a "science of curriculum." In 1928, Rugg and Ann Shumaker coauthored The Child-Centered School. In an era that stressed student input in curriculum planning, the authors stressed the need for curriculum specialists to construct the curriculum.\(^{(102)}\) They also stressed the teacher's role in implementing the curriculum and the need for preplanning. Rugg did not
believe that a curriculum should be based on students' input, needs, or interests. He felt that a student-directed curriculum would lack direction and logic. Rugg advocated cooperation among educational professionals, including teachers, administrators, test experts, and curriculum specialists from various fields.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Rugg shifted his attention to the integration of history, geography, civics, and economics (often collectively referred to as "social studies"). Some of his ideas about labor history, unionism, and collectivism, compounded by his activities with the teachers' union, resulted in a great deal of criticism from established groups. Like Counts and Dewey, Rugg also had an FBI file.

During the mid-1920s and 1930s, most school districts and state education departments were developing curriculum guides. However, the selection of methods and activities was left to teachers. Hollis Caswell (1901-1989) wanted to shift emphasis from formulating a course of study to improving instruction. He envisioned curriculum making as a means of helping teachers coordinate their instructional activities with subject matter and students' needs and interests. Caswell regarded courses of study as guides that teachers should use in planning their daily lessons, not as plans they should follow in detail.

Caswell provided a step-by-step procedure for curriculum making. He and his colleagues presented seven questions that still have relevance:

1. What is a curriculum?
2. Why is there need for curriculum revision?
3. What is the function of subject matter?
4. How do we determine educational objectives?
5. How do we organize curriculum?
6. How do we select subject matter?
7. How do we measure the outcomes of instruction?

Influenced by Bobbitt's definition of curriculum ("that series of things which children and youth must do and experience"). Caswell and Campbell maintained in their book Curriculum Development that the curriculum must consider "all elements in the experience of the learner." They thought that the field of curriculum should incorporate philosophy, psychology, and sociology. Caswell saw curriculum as a process involving scientific steps of development, organization, instruction, and evaluation.

Caswell and Campbell believed that the curriculum must address children's interests, social functions, and organized knowledge. It should provide the proper scope and sequence of subject matter at every grade level. Scope was to represent broad themes such as conservation of natural resources, "worthy home membership," and democratic living. Sequence depended on children's interests and experiences. Subject matter should match the social functions and the learner's interests; knowledge obtained should be measured.

Eight-Year Study

Although traditional subject matter and methods dominated most school curricula, the progressive movement was influential in certain parts of the United States,
particularly Denver, St. Louis, and Winnetka (Illinois). Most high school teachers and principals were reluctant to implement progressive changes because the curriculum was (as it is today) test driven, textbook dominated, and directed by college admission requirements.105

The Progressive Education Association launched the “Eight-Year Study” (1932-1940) to show that a new curriculum designed to meet students’ needs and interests was just as effective as one designed around traditional tests and college admission requirements. As many as 30 progressive or experimental high schools and 1,475 graduates were compared to schools and students following traditional college preparatory tracks. The experimental/progressive group did as well as or better on cognitive, social, and psychological measures.

The study led to several books—for example, by Wilford Aiken and Harry Giles.106 Tyler, a colleague of Giles, was a major participant in the project. Many of his ideas, later published in Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction, stemmed from principles and ideas generated by the study (as well as the NSSE Yearbook).

Although the idea of stating objectives in behavioral terms had been introduced 20 years prior to the study, the curriculum specialists behind the study introduced it on a national level. These curricularists grouped objectives into related categories. (Tyler and Taba later would group objectives into these categories: (1) knowledge acquisition, (2) intellectual skills, (3) attitudes and feelings, and (4) academic skills or study habits.107) See Curriculum Tips 3.4.

Members of the Eight-Year Study understood that evaluation must determine whether a curriculum’s objectives had been achieved. The study confirmed the need for comprehensive evaluation, including data on (1) student achievement, such as initial levels of mastery, performance on standardized tests, social and psychological skills, and creativity; (2) social factors, such as social class, peer group, community patterns, and motivation; (3) teaching-learning processes, such as classroom management, homework assignments, and student–teacher interaction; and (4) instructional methods, such as discussions, demonstrations, problem solving, and discovery.

Taba and Tyler worked on the study’s evaluation team. In the 1940s and ‘50s, Taba developed the idea of comprehensive evaluation in her work as chair of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development’s Commission on Evaluation. She further developed the idea in her 1962 book Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice. Tyler elaborated his ideas on evaluation in his 1949 book, Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction.

The ideas on curriculum making that the study developed did not filter down to the schools because teachers were not deeply involved in curriculum. As Dewey had stated 25 years before the study, teachers often viewed “outside contacts and considerations” as “interferences.”108 Most of the study’s curriculum committees failed to include teachers and restricted them to examining classroom textbooks and materials or modifying curriculum guides developed by central district offices. The exclusion of teachers from the clarification of school goals and program objectives, the organization of subject matter and learning activities, and the evaluation process perpetuated traditional top-down curriculum making.
Classifying Objectives

Translating school goals into objectives entails:
1. formulating objectives in terms of subject areas and/or grade levels and
2. grouping objectives into categories. The example below, derived from the South Bend school district, involves elementary social studies and was developed during the era of the Eight-Year Study. It includes three major categories later advocated by Tyler and Taba for grouping objectives. The practices are still relevant today.

1. Place: Children need to understand that
   a. people are interdependent and must cooperate with one another;
   b. the world is constantly changing;
   c. events, discoveries, and intentions may improve life in some ways but also create problems;
   d. people have established communities and governments to meet their needs;
   e. groups develop traditions, values, and customs, and new generations learn these from their elders;
   f. a place’s geography affects the way people live.

2. Skills: Children need to learn how to
   a. seek information from many sources and judge its validity;
   b. organize facts and form generalizations based on facts;
   c. carry on a discussion based on facts, make generalizations, and draw conclusions;
   d. plan, carry out plans, and evaluate the work and the planning;
   e. accept responsibility; and
   f. develop values by which to judge actions as right or wrong.

3. Attitudes: Children need to be
   a. willing to undertake and complete a job;
   b. anxious to help others and work with others for desirable group goals; and
   c. appreciative of others like and unlike themselves.

Source: For Our Time: A Handbook for Elementary Social Studies Teachers (South Bend, IN: School City of South Bend, 1944), pp. 229–230.

Tyler: Basic Principles

Although Ralph Tyler (1902–1994) published more than 700 articles and 16 books on curriculum, instruction, and evaluation, he is best known for his small 1949 book Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction. Originally written as a course syllabus for his students at the University of Chicago, the book has gone through more than 35 printings. In 128 pages Tyler covers the basic questions that he believes should be answered by anyone involved in planning or writing a curriculum for any subject or grade level:

1. What educational goals should a school seek to accomplish?
2. What educational experiences are likely to lead to these goals?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether a school’s goals are being accomplished?

Judd’s and Dewey’s progressive social theories, and Thorndike’s and Piaget’s learning theories, strongly influenced Tyler. He also drew from behaviorists such as Bobbitt and
Charters, whom he studied under as a graduate student. Other contemporaries such as Counts and Bode also influenced Tyler’s philosophy and principles of curriculum.

We might consider Tyler’s curriculum model an elaboration of Rugg’s four major curriculum tasks and a condensed version of the NSSE’s Twenty-Sixth Yearbook. His model represents a rational, logical, and systematic approach to curriculum making. It emphasizes the learner’s needs, its principles are applicable in varying situations, and it prioritizes objectives. Tyler’s book has been highly influential because of its rational, no-nonsense, sequential approach. In just over 100 pages, he laid out a basic procedure, illustrated with easy-to-understand examples. Tyler provides students a series of concise steps by which to plan curriculum.

Although Tyler does not specify the role of the teacher, supervisor, or principal in curriculum planning, or the differences between curriculum and instruction, he shows how any school or school district can formulate goals and organize its means and resources to shape curriculum and instruction in the desired direction. Tyler offers a thoughtful, easy-to-follow method. Although critics have charged that Tyler’s model is lockstep, technocratic, and overly simplistic,111 it still works for many. Because it is easy to grasp, it serves as a starting point for curriculum students.

A number of Tyler’s influential colleagues—such as Paul Diederich, Harold Dunkel, Maurice Hartung, Virgil Herrick, and Joseph Schwab—accepted many of his ideas and also influenced curriculum. In addition, many of his graduate students became prominent in the field.112 These included Ned Flanders, David Krathwohl, Louis Rath, and Harold Shane. A number of his other students—Ben Bloom, Lee Cronbach, John Goodlad, and Herbert Thelen—were also his colleagues for many years. With the exception of Elliot Eisner, these colleagues continuously praised Tyler’s work in the professional literature. See Table 3.5 for an overview of theorists up to and including Tyler.

**Goodlad: School Reform**

John Goodlad (1920–present) extended Dewey’s ideas of democracy and social activism and Tyler’s rational model of curriculum making. Like Dewey, Goodlad believes that philosophy is the starting point in curriculum and the basis for determining goals, means, and ends. In contrast, Tyler viewed philosophy solely as a filter for modifying the school’s goals and subsequently developing education programs. Whereas Goodlad advocated teacher involvement in modifying education’s goals and developing curriculum, Tyler was unclear about the teacher’s role. In fact, Goodlad maintained that schools should allow teachers to teach half-time and spend the rest of their time interpreting and modifying state goals and planning curriculum activities. As part of a school renewal program, Goodlad advocated that researchers and teachers collaborate in developing and testing new ideas related to curriculum and teaching.113

In Goodlad’s view, schools should help individuals fulfill their potential but also should promote society’s goals. He writes, “Developing individuals to their fullest potential often has been argued as the antithesis of educating the individual to serve the state … Whatever the schools may be able to accomplish in promoting [individual growth and enlightenment], they are simultaneously required to instill a sense of devotion to the nation-state.”114
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEORIST</th>
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<td>Franklin Bobbitt (1876–1956)</td>
<td>Curriculum as a science&lt;br&gt;Emphasis on student needs&lt;br&gt;Prepare students for adult life&lt;br&gt;Clarify objectives&lt;br&gt;Cost-effective education</td>
<td>Grouping and sequencing objectives with corresponding activities&lt;br&gt;Clarifying instructional specifications and tasks</td>
<td>Basic &quot;three Rs&quot; in elementary schools&lt;br&gt;Academic subjects in high school&lt;br&gt;Subject matter and related activities planned by teacher</td>
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<td>Werrett Charters (1875–1952)</td>
<td>Curriculum as a science&lt;br&gt;Emphasis on student needs (and needs assessment)&lt;br&gt;Bridging theory and practice in curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Kilpatrick (1871–1965)</td>
<td>School as a social and community experience&lt;br&gt;Curriculum identified as purposeful activities&lt;br&gt;Child-centered curriculum&lt;br&gt;Child development and growth</td>
<td>Project method, a blend of behaviorism and progressivism&lt;br&gt;Teacher and student planning, emphasis on the student&lt;br&gt;Emphasis on pedagogy or instructional activities: creative projects, social relationships, and small-group instruction</td>
<td>Educating a generalist, not a specialist&lt;br&gt;Integrated subject matter&lt;br&gt;Problem solving</td>
<td>Foundations of Education, 1926</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harold Rugg (1886–1960)</td>
<td>Education in context with society&lt;br&gt;Child-centered curriculum&lt;br&gt;Whole child&lt;br&gt;Curriculum specialist as an engineer</td>
<td>Statement of objectives, related learning experiences, and outcomes&lt;br&gt;Teacher plans curriculum in advance</td>
<td>Emphasis on social studies</td>
<td>The Child Centered Curriculum (with Ann Shumaker), 1928</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Hollis Caswell  
**1901–1989** | Foundations of education (history, philosophy, etc.) influence curriculum development  
Relationship of three major components: curriculum, instruction, and learning  
Student needs and interests  
Curriculum organized around social functions (themes), organized knowledge, and learners' interests | Curriculum as a set of experiences  
Curriculum guides as a source of teacher planning  
Teachers coordinate instructional activities to implement curriculum | Subject matter organized in relation to student needs and interests  
Subject matter developed around social functions and learners' interests | Curriculum Development  
(with Doak Campbell), 1935 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ralph W. Tyler  
**1902–1994** | Curriculum as a science and extension of school's philosophy  
Clarify purposes (objectives) by studies of learners and contemporary life, suggestions from subject specialists, and use of philosophy and psychology  
Student needs and interests  
Relationship between curriculum and instruction | Curriculum as a rational process  
Using objectives to select and organize learning experiences  
Using evaluation to determine outcomes (whether objectives have been achieved)  
Vertical and horizontal relationship of curriculum | Subject matter organized in terms of knowledge, skills, and values  
Emphasis on problem solving  
Educating a generalist, not a specialist | Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction, 1949 |
| John Goodlad  
**1920–present** | Curriculum organized around needs of society and students  
Wide range of purposes, including cognitive, social, civic, vocational, aesthetic, and moral  
Realistic reform policies and programs | Reduce student conformity in classroom  
Constant need for school improvement  
School reforms frequently come and go and add costs to the system; teacher input is preferred  
Standards and high-stakes tests currently drive school reform | Emphasis on active learning and critical thinking  
Involvement of students in planning curriculum content and instructional activities  
Need to align content with standards and high-stakes tests | A Place Called School, 1984  
What Are Schools For, 1989 |
Dewey believed that education should socialize children and instill society's values and norms. In *Democracy and Education* (1916), he stressed schooling for civic and moral responsibility. In *In Praise of Education* (1997), Goodlad argued that education is an inalienable right in a democratic society and its main purpose is "to develop an individual and collective democratic character." Teachers needed to inculcate morals and foster "skills dispositions and knowledge necessary for effective participation in a social democracy."\(^{115}\)

Early in his career, Goodlad launched a study of 260 kindergarten and first-grade classrooms in 100 schools in 13 states. In 1969 he reported his findings: Things were much the same as they had been twenty years before, when Tyler published his classic book on curriculum. "Teaching was predominantly telling and questioning by the teacher with children responding one by one or occasionally in chorus." Teacher talk and the textbook dominated. "Rarely did we find small groups intensely in pursuit of knowledge; rarely did we find individual pupils at work in self-sustaining and inquiry. . . . We are forced to conclude much of the so-called educational reform movement has been blunted on the classroom door."\(^{116}\) Goodlad pointed out that the curriculum reform movement of the 1950s and 1960s was led by university scholars with little practical experience in schools and little respect for teachers; researchers tended to ignore the realities of classrooms and schools.\(^{117}\)

Fifteen years later in *A Place Called School*, Goodlad and his colleagues reported the results of their studies of more than 17,000 students. They described widespread patterns of passive and rote learning. The findings include the following:

1. The classroom is generally organized as a group that the teacher treats as a whole; individual or small-group instruction is rare.
2. The emphasis is on classroom control and order.
3. Teachers check enthusiasm and excitement; the educational tone is flat and neutral.
4. Students passively listen to teachers, write answers to questions, and take tests; they rarely interact or learn from one another.
5. Little use is made of media, guest speakers, or field trips.
6. Instruction rarely goes beyond knowledge acquisition; little effort is made to motivate students to reflect, problem-solve, hypothesize, or think creatively.
7. When teachers prioritize order and students prefer to do as little work as possible, the result is often minimum standards and expectations.
8. Overwhelmingly, secondary-school students say that "good looking students" and "athletes" are the most popular students. Only 10 percent of secondary-school students say that "smart students are popular."\(^{118}\)

Goodlad concluded that: (1) the curriculum prescribed in most schools is ineffective because it has little relation to real events in society; (2) in most schools, there is a disparity between agreed-on goals and the actual program; and (3) students are treated as "passive recipients" of content, and teachers stress correct answers in their classroom instruction.

At the end of his professional career, Goodlad stated that, over the last hundred years, education has consistently embraced the seven Cardinal Principles of
Secondary Education. As for school reform, he saw it reemerge in many national commission reports, such as A Nation at Risk, published in 1983, which employed “military language” in trying to link it to the U.S. decline in the global economy. Goodlad contended that reformers have “tricked” the public by continually suggesting that “all schools are failing,” even though most parents rate their local schools relatively highly. Today, school reform has been narrowed to standards, especially issues of testing and accurate assessment of student outcomes. Test scores have become “the bottom line.”

Current Focus

The Tyler model summed up the best principles of curriculum making for the first half of the twentieth century. Many curricularists have used this model. In fact, many practitioners in schools consider Tyler’s model the basic way to create curricula. Currently, however, all traditional and technical models are being challenged.

According to nontraditional and nontechnocratic scholars, we cannot reduce curriculum to a particular theory, plan, or definition, much less agree on what is acceptable or valid. Critics claim that “philosophies, theories, [and principles] are not determined only by static knowledge and empirical data. The world of subjectivity and art is considered just as valid as Aristotelian logic and Newtonian science.”

Given the postmodern world of relativism, there is considerable controversy regarding what is and is not objective and true.

Some critics of the educational status quo argue that schools need to be “liberated from institutional and capitalistic, [as well as racist and gender] indoctrination. Learners [should] no longer have an obligatory curriculum imposed on them. Schools and society should no longer discriminate and foster a class society based on possession of certificates” and standardized tests. Just as there is “an unequal distribution of economic capital and political power in society,” the schools provide “an unequal distribution of cultural/educational capital.” Current curricularists such as Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, Ivan Illich, Peter McLaren, and William Pinar hold such views. Others, such as William Doll, Eliot Eisner, Maxine Greene, and Herb Kliebard, are more moderate but still have rejected the scientific/rational model and most forms of traditional/technocratic thinking. The latter group, instead of weaving radical politics into their discussion, are more concerned with reformulating curriculum along an aesthetic, linguistic, historical, humanistic, and existentialist line.

The field of curriculum now involves numerous political and social interpretations. It is dynamic and ever-changing, incorporating knowledge from other disciplines (e.g., philosophy, psychology, sociology, and political science).

● Conclusion

From the colonial period to around World War I, curriculum was a matter of evolving subject matter. Some reform ideas concerned pedagogical principles of the mid- and late 1800s, mainly as a result of European influence and the emerging progressive reform movement of
the early twentieth century. But these ideas were limited to theoretical discussions and a few isolated, innovative schools. The perennialist curriculum, which emphasized the classics and timeless and absolute values based on religious and then moral doctrines, dominated for the first 150 years of our nation's history.

The idea of curriculum principles and processes began to take shape after 1900 and scientific principles and progressive philosophy were increasingly influential. Curriculum as a field of study—with its own methods, theories, and ways of solving problems—has made real advances since the 1920s. Most of the advances have taken place since Tyler wrote his basic text on curriculum.

● Endnotes

5. A. Beuchamp, The Curriculum of the Elementary School, p. 34.


55. Thayer and Levit, The Role of the School in American Society, p. 382.


85. Ibid., p. 283.


94. Ibid., p. 213.


101. Ibid.


110. Ibid., p. 1.


