

INSTITUTE FOR  
CATHOLIC LIBERAL  
EDUCATION

# Aspiring School Leaders: Curriculum Integration and Themes

DANNY FLYNN



## *Come Holy Spirit!*

All:

*Come Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.*

Leader:

*Send forth Thy spirit, and they shall be created,*

All:

*And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.*

Leader:

*Let us pray...*

All:

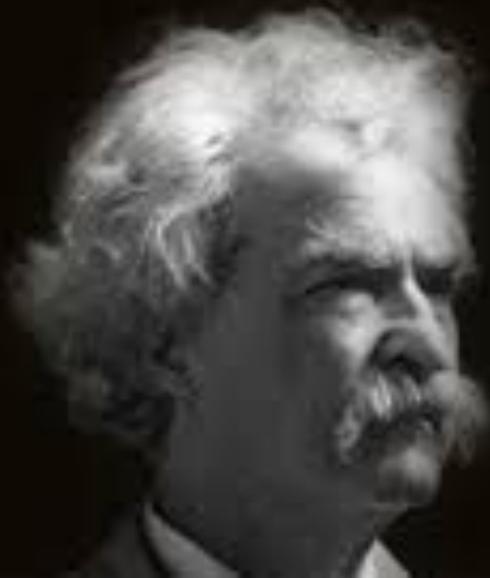
*O God, Who by the light of the Holy Spirit, instructed the hearts of Thy faithful, grant us, in the same Spirit, to savor what is right and to ever rejoice in His consolation.*

*Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

# Consider approaching curriculum differently?

„I have never let my schooling  
interfere with my education“

Mark Twain  
1835-1910



# Teachers need to approach work like a Gardener

- Parable of the sower
- Jesus goes to the garden at least 3 times to pray
- Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene as a gardener
- Hundreds of references to planting and growing used in scripture
- There does not appear to be any specializations.



# Curriculum Foundations

- What factors contribute to curriculum develop in your building?
  - Diocese?
  - Publisher?
  - State or Diocesan Standards and Objectives?
  - Strategic plan?
  - Test Scores?
  - Board of Advisors?

If you were homeschooling your own child, how would you build the program around your child's growth and development? What would matter to you in this process? How intentional would you be?

# The Integrated Curriculum

- A. When you studied the Trivium, you saw the classical approach seeks to align to a child's natural development, what Dorothy Sayers calls "teaching with the grain".
- B. The integrated curriculum likewise seeks to reflect the nature of knowledge as being true, good, and beautiful but also one.
- C. In order to understand this, we must go back to the goal of education: *the formation of the student himself – his mind and character* – in such a way that he can live his whole life, so far as possible, in a way that is consistent with the truth about himself as a human being created in the image and likeness of God. The integrated curriculum is one way we seek to do this.



# St Peter's Square through the senses



# Integration can be viewed in 3 ways

1. **Subjective integration** – integrates through the curriculum the aptitudes, habits, and qualities that will cultivate a love for beauty, goodness, and truth
  - a. Examples: mindful selection of art, music, and literature throughout subjects and grade levels; memorization and recitation of poetry; thematic integration like freedom, dignity of the human person, etc. Opportunities for observation and rendering in multiple subject areas (math, science, art, etc.)
2. **Objective integration** – the content of the curriculum, the intellectual substance that forms the coherent story of the world, which overcomes the fragmentation of knowledge.
  - a. Examples: reading “The Memoirs of Joan of Arc” while studying that period of history; reading a biography of Galen, classical Roman physician, while studying the human body in Nature Studies; including Church documents in the study of an historical era.
3. **Pedagogical integration** – the methods of instruction and assessment that reinforce the school’s vision (the purpose dictates the method)
  - a. Examples: mimetic and dialectic as foundational approaches; open response assessments; students standing to give answers in class (when not in a Socratic circle situation)



# Goals of an Integrated plan



1) the acquisition of the skills necessary to read well, write well, and think well;

2) the development of what is most human in our students;

3) the development of the habits of virtue – memory, attention, joy, exuberance – in short, our students' birthright as recipients of the Catholic intellectual tradition.



# How to Develop the Integrated Curriculum

- A. Education is both about conveying both a definite *body of knowledge as well as forming certain aptitudes*, qualities of character, and habits of the mind in the student.
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- B. In terms of conveying the body of knowledge, we begin with an *historically based curriculum*, rooted in an *understanding of the human person* as a creature, *created in the image and likeness of God*. From this starting point, the curriculum presents history as a coherent story propelled by the human desire for God and the way in which God came to meet – and inflame this desire – in Christ.
- C. So *the incarnation of Christ is seen as the center – the core* - of the historically based curriculum. Special attention is given to the cultures that make up the Western tradition – Greek, Roman, Jewish, and other Near East cultures.



# Our goal: help our children understand these cultures as they understood themselves.

The second dimension – integrating the curriculum within the child himself- refers to the cultivation of the aptitudes, habits of mind, qualities and skills that shape his approach to all subjects, binding them together in what becomes “wonder and love for all that is genuinely true, good, and beautiful.”

- a. For example, we emphasize observation and rendering subjects as varied as art, music, and science. The purpose of this emphasis is to cultivate within the student the habits of looking, seeing, and noticing, the development of that which makes us most fully free and fully alive.
- b. These, in turn, lead to the capacity for concentration, silence, and immersion of the self into what is being studied. By way of example, the qualities and habits needed to read beyond the surface of a story, to notice mathematical patterns in nature, to distinguish one bird from another, to hear parts of harmony in music are constantly developed across the curriculum.



# Practical School-wide Curriculum Integration

- Plan units with other teachers based on shared time periods
- Use reading groups to integrate age groups.
- Use feasts and competitions to mix grades together
- Use house system to have culture and traditions come to life.
- Center traditions around liturgical feasts
- Mixed grades (who teach the same time period) attend field trips together.



# Zoom out to bigger questions when lesson planning

- When a student walks out of your class, what do they take with them?
- When a student graduates from your school, what do you hope they have learned?
- Who decides what is important enough to be taught, for how long, and from what perspective?
- Will the table of contents serve as the guide?



# Obstacles to Thematic and Integrated Instruction

- Merely following a Textbook as the only guide.
- Overly focused on memorization of dates and raw facts without any connection to a timeline.
- Trying to cram every Objective and Standard into each lesson.
- Over emphasis on bold faced vocabulary words.
- Teaching to the test.
- Students who just want to get the grade and move on.



# Approaching the Themes



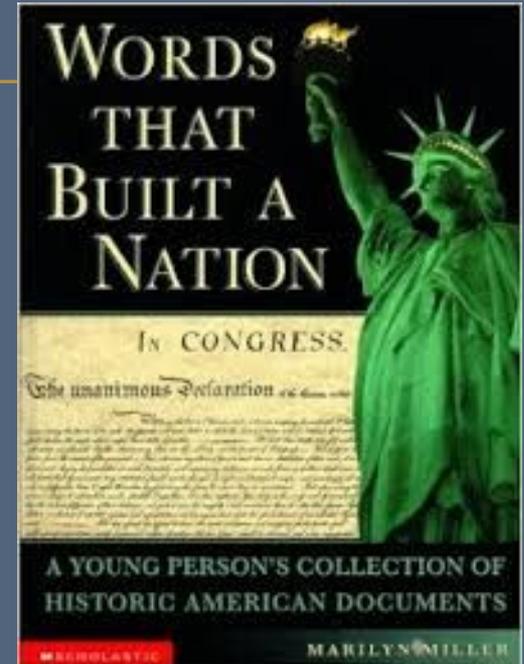
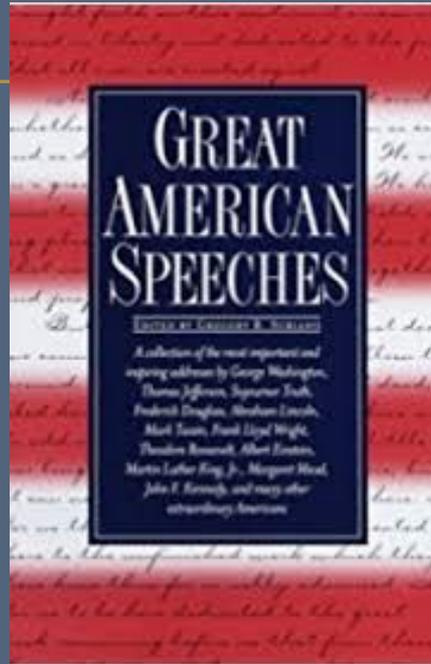
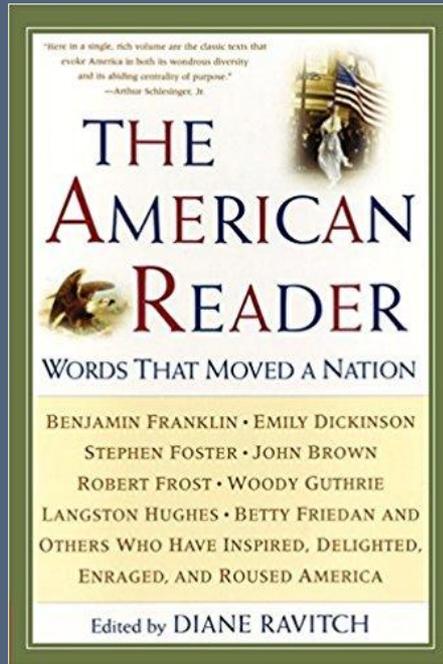
- *If you were sitting down to write a syllabus where would you start? What would you assemble? How would you know what to include?*
- Immerse yourself in the content. Read, read and read. Try multiple authors, various perspectives and try to think from the actual person's perspective.
- Read primary sources, autobiographies and the Great and Good literature from that time period.
- Are there any moral dilemmas or virtues displayed?
- Use varied sources from the same time period to present types: Art, Music, Literature, Architecture, Poetry, church documents, speeches and pictures.
- Keep detailed notes of recurring patterns.

# Identifying the Themes

- You can only do this after you have exhausted your research. Step back and glean the defining truths and arguments of this time period.
- Think culturally: A culture shapes people. You will have to read between the lines because it is not perfectly mapped out here.
- Identifying defining moments: Is there anything that a poet struggled with, that a people rebelled against, or a Pope decreed?
- Continually ask yourself “What was the authors objective?” “What is God trying to teach man during this time period?”
- Look for truths and virtues that keep appearing.
- See how this time period compares with the previous time period.
- Pray on this and think about it.



# Recommended Reading



# Advice for true integration and how to find themes

- Allow yourself to get caught up in controversial figures, documents and dilemmas if they support the theme.
- ~~Truths and objectives are not the same thing. Guide and lead~~ them to the truth gradually through story and debate.
- Teach them to ponder and wonder why we study history. It's not just a series of actions and reactions.
- The best teachers are the ones who ask the best questions and know where the questions are leading their students.
- First be a student and allow yourself to be moved by the content to eventually fall in love with the subject.



# History is Alive: Think beyond the text. Instead, Convey the Culture



# Themes: In his own words

- Unit: Explorers and the New World
  - Themes: Slavery, Dignity of HP, Art, Beauty, Monarchies, Obedience, Authority
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- Unit: Colonization, Puritan Society
  - Themes: Fear, doubt, Greed, Judgement, Witchcraft, love, obedience, Sin, Freedom, Repentance
- Unit: Revolution
  - Themes: Slavery, Freedom, Conscience, Dignity of HP, Liberty, Obedience
- Unit: Civil War
  - Themes: Decision making, Separation, Voice, Conscience, Mourning, Loss, Slavery
- Unit: Modern Era
  - Themes: Honesty, Fatherhood, Justice, Dignity of HP

# Basic 4 themes for 1 academic year of US History

- Free will
- Freedom
- Virtue
- Dignity of the Human Person



# Example Themes: Freedom

## Topics

War, Colonization, Founding Fathers, Rights, Slavery, Civil Rights Movement

## Content

CCC, Scripture, Primary Sources, Speeches, Documents, Artwork, Music

## Questions

Where does freedom come from? Can freedom be bought? If so, what is the price? Which would you rather have freedom or equality? Compare and Contrast freedom and free will.

# Sample Unit: Civil War

- TOPICS: Slavery, Dred Scott Decision, Bloody Kansas, Abolitionist Movement, Succession, Fredrick Douglass, Gettysburg Address, Brother Vs. Brother, Rights
- Identify common themes found in topics.
- Draw Connections between topics.
- Use primary sources to capture thoughts and words.
- Assess them by comparing and contrasting topics and themes.
- Help them see that war is not just a series of battles.



# Sample Unit: Civil War Integration

Defining moments	Key Leaders	Literature	Religion	Primary Sources	Art, Music, Poetry
Secession	Frederick Douglass	Uncle Tom's Cabin	CCC on DHP	Speeches	
Dred Scott Decision	Abraham Lincoln	Up from Slavery	Pope Gregory	Papal letters	
John Brown's raid	Jefferson Davis	Killer Angels	Just War Theory	Pictures	
Bloody Kansas	Abolitionist	Red Badge of Courage		Journals	

# Assignment for the Month

Pick a unit that is currently taught in your building. You will be planning a new way to teach this same topic in an integrated fashion.

- What truth or Logos are we unveiling for the students?
- Select various ways you can integrate this into the soul of the child.
- What aspects of culture could be included in this? Art, Music, Architecture
- Do my literature selections correspond to my time period?
- What aspects of faith and morals could be included?
- What parts could be memorized or performed? How will I assess them?
- Identify themes as needed.



# Discussion Questions

1. What recommendations would you make to your staff when planning out units aimed at integration and themes?
2. What are some practical ways to model this approach as an administrator?
3. Is there anything you can do with the master schedule to help prioritize this aspect of your curriculum?
4. What evidence will you be able to gather to know if this is being implemented and if it is working in your building?
5. What sort of intervention would be needed for a staff member who might be struggling in this area?



# Scenarios

1. A 5th grade student transfers into your school and has no exposure to the varied time periods you offer in the lower grades. How will you help the child and the family acclimate to this type of integrated learning?
2. A parent requests a meeting with you. They explain that very concerned because they want their 3rd grade child to become an engineer and they feel there is a heavy emphasis on the integrated humanities but they feel like the math and sciences are on separate islands from the mainland subjects. What can you do to better explain the pedagogy and the direction of your curriculum?
3. You run a school that made the decision to transition to classical liberal arts over a 3 year period. You are adding a new element to the process each year. When would you decide to focus on integration and themes and why?
4. Since transitioning your school to a classical curriculum, you have been looking for ways to create new traditions with a shared culture showing integration across multiple grade levels. What are some examples of new traditions you can start which are geared towards integrating families into the shared cultures you are teaching?

