



The Living Curriculum

The *Living Curriculum*? What is that and where did the concept originate?

Several years ago, a Christian school administrator at Wheaton Academy began to develop this Biblical principle found in II Corinthians 3:2 in which Paul tells the believers to whom he is writing “you yourselves are our letter written not within but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.” While we at The First Academy cannot take credit for developing this model, we certainly embrace the concept and utilize it in our personnel selection, training and supervision paradigm. Please carefully review the following material, written by a fellow Christian educator, as you consider the expectations for employment at The First Academy.

“Parents who send their child off to school are in effect asking a group of teachers to partner with them in preparing their son or daughter for life. The choice of teachers is without a doubt one of the most important parental decisions, because we know that God will ultimately hold parents accountable for the education of children. We know that often life-long values and priorities are cemented during the crucial high school years. At the same time, we also know that dominant parental influence on children is declining while the influence of peers and other significant adults—often teachers, coaches, and sponsors—is growing. Accordingly, who will parents trust with their sons’ and daughters’ hearts and minds during the formative high school years?

We believe Christian parents are looking for a special type of teacher, one we call the *Living Curriculum*. Parents understand these teachers will have awesome responsibilities and opportunities to shape their children’s lives. But, how do we identify a *Living Curriculum* Teacher? First of all, there is no prototype. They come with different personalities from different types of families. They were raised in different environments in different parts of the world. They attended different colleges or universities and enjoy different styles of worship. Today, they are a wonderful mix of people rooted in Evangelical Christianity but with different heritages and different experiences. We do believe, though, that *Living Curriculum* Teachers share a number of identifiable beliefs and qualities.

Mature and Growing

Living Curriculum Teachers are born-again, growing followers of Christ. They are men and women of prayer, in love with God’s Word. They are active participants in a fellowship of believers. They look at all of life through the lens of scripture while modeling a Biblical worldview that guides their thoughts, words and deeds. Patterns in their lives reflect fruit of the spirit. They model spiritual as well as professional, personal growth. They desire to be part of the ongoing work of discipleship in student's lives. Most importantly, *Living Curriculum* Teachers desire that young people experience the same rich and deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ that dominates their lives.

Happy and Healthy

Living Curriculum Teachers are happy and positive people. They smile and laugh a lot. They see the glass half full, not half empty. They appreciate the affirmation of students, but they do not rely on it. They experience life outside the classroom in order to have something to share. They are known to support other people and other programs. They find the best in students, even when it takes some searching. They catch kids doing right more often than doing wrong. Student successes truly excite them. They like people, especially teenagers. People, especially teenagers, like them. Students trust, respect and desire to be around *Living Curriculum* Teachers.



Humble and Trustworthy

Living Curriculum Teachers take to heart the implications of James 3:1 ‘..we who teach will be judged more strictly.’ They have an open mind and sensitive spirit. They are approachable, and they really listen. They demonstrate a servant heart by asking, ‘What can I do to help?’ They accept feedback as freely as they give it. When they make mistakes, they understand the process of seeking forgiveness, working towards reconciliation and making restoration. They believe the Matthew 18 principle, of going directly to your brother, applies to them as well as others. Consequently, they talk to students, parents and colleagues, not about themselves. Students, parents, and colleagues trust *Living Curriculum* Teachers.

Relationship Builders

Christ modeled a powerful type of mentoring relationship with his students, demonstrating that there is more than content to be taught. *Living Curriculum* Teachers also understand relationships are a key to good education. Given the ever-changing nature of our society which touches even the Christian home (broken marriages, situation ethics, the media’s bombarding message of promiscuity, drugs, alcohol, and pornography), we see positive, Biblically-based relationships between teenagers and teachers and coaches as essential. The growth in Christian character often occurs more as a result of modeling through relationships than it does through preaching and teaching. Character is caught as well as taught.

Living Curriculum Teachers are uniquely equipped and given the opportunity by mom and dad to replicate, replay and live the Biblical values that have been previously taught by the home and church. They take the time to know students as whole people. *Living Curriculum* Teachers also understand much education happens outside the classroom. Consequently, they attend games and performances in order to support and build up young people. They even welcome young people into their own homes. They take the time to support and encourage. *Living Curriculum* Teachers pay attention to the individual needs of students as they work at building meaningful and appropriate relationships.

Nurturing Culture

Living Curriculum Teachers understand students thrive when treated with dignity within an orderly and respectful environment. All students are not only given the opportunity to participate but are encouraged to participate. It is a safe environment, safe for students to share and be themselves. Sarcasm and embarrassment are not a part of this culture. Effort is recognized and creativity rewarded. Goals are clearly stated and time is used wisely. The focus of the classroom remains on educational objectives. Students understand the ‘law of natural consequences’ is in effect. Choices bring logical and predictable results. Although standards and expectations are known to be reasonable, understandable, and consistently followed, the real focus is on self-discipline and self-control. When students miss the mark, the teacher knows how to gently correct, provide just consequences and encourage restoration. Students know they can count on a predictable, nurturing and stimulating environment in the *Living Curriculum* Teacher’s classroom.

Parent Partners

Living Curriculum Teachers desire to work with parents because they understand they are serving in-loco parentis. They understand that parents crave feedback, not just information about grades. Consequently, they continually communicate with mom and dad. They communicate in a timely way, bad news before it becomes serious and good news even when it does not seem that big a deal. They notice emerging qualities in kids and encourage parents by sharing their observations. They understand parents know more about their children than the educational theorists and tap into that understanding. They show respect even when they may have a difference of opinion. They respect the privacy of families and exercise confidentiality. They believe the best education is one where parents and teachers work together supporting students from both sides.



Quality Instruction

Living Curriculum Teachers are never content with mastery of their subject area. They desire to stay current and know more. They actively read, develop professional contacts and attend conferences in order to further their professional development. They naturally connect their subject to life outside the classroom and bring life outside the classroom into the classroom. They know how to plan, and they have a plan. They have routines, but they never become routine. Activities are designed to make efficient use of time and remain focused on instructional objectives. They are reflective. They understand theory and use it, but they also adjust according to what works. They never stop getting better at the art and science of teaching.

Living Curriculum Teachers are effective communicators. Students find them easy to understand. Although they represent a variety of personalities, they each have a presence. Students find them interesting and worthy of their attention. Students imitate their strengths and passions instead of mocking their idiosyncrasies. They know how to explain things a variety of ways to a range of students. They work at teaching to a variety of learning styles. They listen and continually check for understanding. Students find them approachable and accessible.

Living Curriculum Teachers understand teaching content is essential but not the only goal. Rote learning is foundational but not enough. Study skills, higher level analysis, critical thinking skills and problem solving abilities should all be taught and practiced within the study of each subject area. Creativity is evident in good instruction. Technology, various forms of media and the Socratic approach are examples of resources and methods used by *Living Curriculum* Teachers to enhance instruction and ultimately improve understanding.

Living Curriculum Teachers understand effective assessment is critical to learning. They work hard to give students the opportunity to demonstrate understanding in a variety of ways. They take time with the slower student while they avoid wasting the time of the faster student. Assignments are necessary and meaningful, challenging and reasonable, and not busy work. Cross-disciplinary efficiencies are created. Feedback is personal, prompt and helpful. When creating assignments, teachers are mindful of balance-of-life issues. They are careful not to intrude on family responsibilities or church activities. They recognize that life learning may at times be even more important than their particular school subject. *Living Curriculum* Teachers use meaningful assessment to extend learning.

Motivators

All *Living Curriculum* Teachers have an inner motivation that drives them to nurture growth in students through relationships, excellence and serve all to the glory of God. They are passionate about helping students discover their gifts. They take time with students one-on-one. They write notes of encouragement and provide helpful suggestions. *Living Curriculum* Teachers encourage students to be actively involved in the local church. They seek to point them in a direction matching their aptitudes, abilities, and heart's desire within the framework of God's guiding principles. To see a student end up serving God, using his or her gifts clearly within the will of God, provides an indescribable joy to the *Living Curriculum* Teacher. At the end of the day, students exposed to *Living Curriculum* Teachers become not just passionate about a particular subject area, but they learn to be passionate about pleasing God with their life and gifts.

Just as soil, water and sunlight work together to nourish the plant, the Christian home, the Christian church and the Christian school provide similar, consistent and fertile nourishment. We believe *Living Curriculum* Teachers have a limitless opportunity to help shape the minds, hearts and souls of the next generation. Consequently, we are passionately committed to providing *Living Curriculum* Teachers for The First Academy parents and their students."

The calling of God on your life to serve as a teacher is humbling, challenging and exciting. As we grow in our walk with the Lord and seek to be good stewards of the gifts He has given, let me encourage you to become a *Living Curriculum* Teacher—there may be no greater calling than this.

Credit: The Living Curriculum was designed by Dr. Frost of Wheaton Academy