

Cushing Academy

LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

**Developing 21st Century Curricula
for High School Students**

A Collaborative Project led by

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The curriculum development project is one of many activities led by visiting scholars from the Oxford Martin School and other schools at the University of Oxford. These conversations are used as a resource for on-going curriculum development at Cushing Academy. The curriculum project is available, as open content, for use by secondary schools across the United States and around the world.

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I. Learning the Challenges of the 21st Century

- a. The committee feels that students should learn about the following. This list represents the topics that we see as necessary to create well-rounded students who are prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

Environmental degradation

Cultural awareness

Economic development

Energy sources

Overpopulation

Mental health

Diseases and epidemiology

Human migration

Politics (theory and practice)

Propaganda (how to recognize bias and motivations behind the creation of propaganda)

Current state of and advances in technology

Conceptions of humanity (what makes us human in a world in which we increasingly interface with machines)

Leadership

Current events topics

Scientific investigation

Conflict resolution

II. Motivation

The committee identified factors that contribute to student motivation and noted that both the student and the faculty populations bear a responsibility for facilitating motivation in themselves and others. The following is a list of what the students identified as motivational factors in their own population. The committee recommends further investigation into the motivational factors at work in the larger student population as the students engaged in this committee represent only a small subset of the whole.

Peer acceptance and opinions

Satisfaction derived in the epiphanic moment and in accomplishing a task (self-actualization)

Love of the challenge provided by instructors

Competitive nature and the desire to be the best in the class

Desire for excellence

Relevance of the material to “real life”

Leadership and enthusiasm of others (teachers or other students - their excitement is infectious)

Gathering a new set of information

Building on existing knowledge

Setting- relaxed feeling in the classroom, a faculty member and peers open to tangents/questions, contact hours with faculty in and out of the classroom, organization of classroom space in clusters or circles not in rows, small class size.

III. The Extra-Classroom Initiative

The students of the committee identified potential opportunities for increased extra-classroom learning that could support and enhance the understanding of topics introduced during special assemblies and/or ideas supporting the year's overarching theme.

Reasoning-

The committee recognizes that the students and faculty must have adequate time to process ideas presented in assemblies or in the summer reading and felt that building meetings into the schedule for the year would allow the students to find additional connections in the ideas presented.

IV. Curriculum and Structure-

The curriculum for each meeting would examine and enhance the understanding of the material presented by the special assembly speakers, the summer reading, or the year's overarching theme. The meetings could begin with a passage from the summer reading, a portion of a TED talk, a live-feed presentation by a student, faculty member or expert in the field simulcast to all classrooms or recorded loaded from YouTube, any opportunity to respond to a recent panel discussion, or any other material deemed relevant. The faculty members would each be assigned a classroom or breakout space and would work with small groups, such as advisee groups, to discuss the ideas presented and apply them to the students' work in the classroom. The emphasis of the workshop should be to draw connections between the speakers and the overarching theme of the year. Classroom teachers should support this endeavor by assigning homework that allows students to relate their workshop experience to the information and skills covered in class. The topic and/or materials for the workshop would be crafted or selected by a committee of faculty and students and workshop groups could support the selection or structure of future workshops and speakers by submitting suggestions and critiques to the committee. The workshops were estimated to be a fine opportunity to create relevancy for the theme throughout the year.

Curriculum Suggestions

The committee identified areas in which the Challenges for the 21st Century are being met in courses and where we could expand the curriculum to embrace these ideas.

Language classes-

*Teaching culture- Culture is covered as a part of many language classes, but can be broadened to include more information about cultures in the developing world. Ex: French class could include the culture of France and of French speaking nations in the Caribbean and in Africa, Spanish classes could offer a year of Spanish culture and other years could investigate culture in Latin America.

*Latin class was noted as particularly useful due to the utility of learning Latin roots and the addition of philosophy as a component of the course.

History classes-

- *It was noted that understanding historical context is the basis for understanding the choices that nations and people make today.
- *We value learning historical theories (Ex: What are the principles of fascism and what are the social factors that seem to precipitate the evolution of fascist states?) as they influence the patterns of social and political action today
- *Great value was placed on increasing the amount of comparison between historical scenarios and the status and actions of modern day nations.

English classes-

- *The committee placed great value on the practice of writing as a means of learning communication skills and students appreciated the fact that they are asked to learn proper structure and rhetoric of written arguments.
- *The department should continue to select readings that support themes listed in the challenge list above. Emphasis should be placed on the cultural aspect and context of the reading selections.

Math classes-

- *The students enjoy and are stimulated by word problems and the application of the information that they are learning.

Science classes-

- *Students appreciate the emphasis on the issue of why the subjects are important.
- *The roles of culture, politics, and history on scientific inquiry can and should be included as a part of the science curriculum.
- *Instructors should always apply the information taught to current events.

Overall notes on class curricula-

- *The group felt that we should increase the profile of the summer reading and incorporate into classes in order to establish the year's theme and to provide greater connection from the reading to our work in classes.
- *The group would like to see an increase in small curriculum modules that can focus on the central theme of the year, but can be applied to a number of disciplines. This could include a universal unit that could be placed in the two weeks following the Thanksgiving break, but it should also include opportunities for application throughout the year to allow the theme to become more integrated in the fabric of the school
- *The Leadership Institute should continue gathering and offering of resources that will allow faculty members to create their own modules and modes of introducing relevance.
- *Surveys should be conducted to ascertain areas of reticence for faculty and students.

*The group felt that we can do more to increase student exposure to current events, by incorporating current events into each class. To this end, the committee suggests the offering of travel opportunities, ongoing Skype connection with other schools, and possibly bringing students from developing countries to Cushing for a period of time in which students could work together and share information. The model of creating photo novellas, plays, or other artworks with students in developing countries via Skype and email was suggested by Dr. Ariana as a means of increasing interest and curiosity about the living conditions and issues in other countries. This technique enhances communication skills, research skills, and skills germane to the course or club context in which the technique is utilized.

*The group would also like a more formalized structure in which to provide feedback on speakers and to suggest speakers for the 21st Century Leadership series.

*Time for faculty to share pedagogical techniques and to review each other's work in the classroom would facilitate additional educational evolution.

* *Topics in Global Health*- The interdisciplinary nature of the course was stimulating for both students and faculty and was suggested as a fine model for other courses in various disciplines. Great emphasis was placed on facilitating the construction of a contextual interdisciplinary model that could be embedded into all aspects of the Cushing education.