Fast Facts for Curriculum Development in Nursing

How to Develop and Evaluate Educational Programs, Second Edition

Janice L. McCoy, PhD, RN
Marion G. Anema, PhD, RN

Updated and revised to meet all current standards

This is a concise step-by-step guide for novice nurse educators on the
development of new programs and curricula—or the revision of existing ones—that meet the standards of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the CNEA, the ACEN, and the CCNE. The second edition of this quick-access guide is updated to meet all new and revised standards for program approval and covers the full scope of the development process from conception through evaluation. The resource’s thoughtful organization and bullet-point format enable users to access the information they need in seconds, and an abundance of updated examples clarify each step of the way.

The book uses concepts and principles of Systems Theory to guide curriculum development and evaluation. It addresses the major components of the educator role: teaching, curriculum, developing a mission statement and program philosophy, selecting an organizational framework, using information technology, and evaluating both students and programs. It stresses use of evaluation procedures in which decisions are based on data. Each step of the process is organized into manageable parts that build upon each other, instilling the confidence and know-how to build quality programs. Chapters define key terms, summarize important points, and list resources for additional study.

New to the Second Edition:

- Meets all of the new and revised standards for program approval according to the National State Boards of Nursing, the CNEA, the ACEN, and the CCNE
- Features updated examples demonstrating each step of the development process
- Highlights collaborative curriculum development
- Introduces the career ladder experience and the concept of learning designs
- Discusses educational/competency outcomes

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Janice L. McCoy
Marion G. Anema
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FAST FACTS for CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN NURSING
Janice L. McCoy, PhD, RN, held early career roles as a school nurse, flight nurse, and cardiac catheterization lab nurse. For most of her nursing career, she held appointments at Central Wyoming College, as nursing faculty; nursing program director; division chair, Professional/Technical Division (1990–1993) and Allied Health Division (1993–1999); and director of Distance Education/Lifelong Learning (1999–2002).

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Dr. Anema has held administrative and faculty positions as associate director, Nursing Programs, College of Health Professions, Western Governors University; faculty chair, Walden University; dean, School of Nursing, Tennessee State University; and assistant dean, Texas Woman’s University, Dallas.

She holds certificates as an online instructor in case management, online quality management, and intensive bioethics (Georgetown University). Her scholarly articles have been published in Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing, Journal of Nursing Administration, Nursing, Journal of Nursing Education, Nurse Educator, International Nursing Review, Computers in Nursing, and Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, among others.

Dr. McCoy and Dr. Anema published Competency-Based Nursing Education: Guide to Achieving Outstanding Learner Outcomes in 2010 (Springer Publishing Company). They continue to provide consulting services for nursing programs involved in curriculum development/revision and/or program accreditation processes.
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The primary purpose of the second edition continues to be as a guide for nurse educators as they navigate the challenging process of developing and evaluating educational offerings, whether at the program level or the individual course level. It is predicted that demands on the healthcare system will continue and require additional nurses at all levels of preparation. Consumers are expected to be actively involved in their own healthcare and health decisions. This increased consumer involvement will require an increase in educational opportunities so that consumer decisions are informed. The responsibilities for maintaining and improving individual health must be shared between the nurse and the consumer. Professional groups need to determine best practices and evidence, informed consumers need to know how to care for themselves, and health providers need to be prepared to provide the needed education.

Practice standards and advances in healthcare technology continue to change at a rapid pace requiring informed and competent healthcare providers; thus, staff developers need the skills to develop and evaluate continuing education offerings. Many nurses entering the educational environment come directly from clinical practice. Although very knowledgeable about current practice standards and expectations, these new educators are unfamiliar with the program and course development requirements and educational standards. The bottom line is that all healthcare providers are educators and need to be aware of the accepted standards for development and evaluation of all health education offerings. Although textbooks explaining the program or curricular processes abound, this second edition continues as a “how-to” book to quickly guide the novice educator in the development of programs or courses that meet most approval/
accrediting agency standards. This second edition can be used to create new programs or courses, and it can also be used to revise existing programs and courses. It does not stop with the development process but includes an evaluation process so that decisions can be based on data. The second edition emphasizes that data collection is not sufficient if data analysis does not occur, and provides examples to assist the educator in data analysis, the transforming of data into information for decision making. The second edition also includes suggestions on how to transform the curriculum, programs, and individual educational offerings into competency-based educational systems.

This second edition is divided into four parts. Part I consists of five chapters and follows a step-by-step process especially helpful in the development of all levels of nursing education programs. This part provides a summary of nursing program approval/accreditation processes and stresses the importance of using systems thinking in program development. In addition, this part explains how to develop the program elements required by many approval/accrediting agencies.

Chapter 1 summarizes the processes for program approval at the local and state levels. Considerations for making national accreditation decisions are incorporated. Chapter 2 reviews the basic concepts and principles of systems thinking. Program and course development can be simplified when approached through the lens of systems. Chapter 3 begins with the development of a mission statement that is congruent with the mission of the organization/parent institution. Chapter 4 moves on to the development of a program philosophy that is congruent with the philosophy of the organization/parent institution. The development of a program philosophy statement explains how the program mission is achieved. Chapter 5 discusses the development of an organizing framework. It is from the program philosophy statement and the organization/parent institution-required learner attributes that the major concepts are identified and defined.

Part II consists of four chapters that build on the Part I chapters and guide the development of educational and level outcomes as well as curricular mapping processes. The importance for educators to accept responsibility for program/curricular development is emphasized.

Chapter 6 guides the reader in the development of educational outcomes. Educational outcomes delineate what learners need to know and be able to do at the completion of the program or educational offering. Chapter 7 breaks down the educational outcomes into
a logical sequence that demonstrates progression, either by program level or by end-of-semester expectations or educational offering. Leveling assists educators in selecting or designing educational experiences that are at an appropriate learning level and demonstrate progression. Chapter 8 explains curricular mapping of the concepts and subconcepts from the organizing framework to ensure all concepts are present, leveled appropriately, and progress from simpler expectations to more complex expectations. Curricular mapping also guides educators with course development so that educational experiences are at an appropriate level and demonstrate progression, reduce duplication, and minimize gaps. Chapter 9 discusses the important role that educators play in program development or revision. Preparing educators for new roles and the changes that are required are presented. Strategies to overcome resistance to change are also included. Successful program development or revision is dependent on willing and committed educators.

Part III consists of three chapters addressing curriculum and course design using an organizing framework.

Chapter 10 summarizes the elements of a curriculum and the importance of incorporating the program philosophy and organizing framework. Several factors that influence curriculum development are included. Chapter 11 presents a variety of curriculum design and delivery options, as well as a variety of organizing structures that support curriculum design. Chapter 12 summarizes several options for course design to meet institutional, educational, and professional requirements. Different types of teaching strategies are considered.

Part IV consists of five chapters and addresses evaluation processes. It pulls everything together in the evaluation of programs and curriculum.

Chapter 13 discusses the identification of program outcomes. Where educational outcomes specify what the learner is expected to demonstrate at program completion, program outcomes identify the expectations for the program and are often reported as aggregate data.

Chapter 14 pulls all the previous elements together in a comprehensive, systematic evaluation process. The evaluation process begins when a program or course is first developed or revised. Data about the effectiveness and quality of the education offering are collected and analyzed, thus allowing for trended data over time—semester, year, or multiple years. Chapter 15 focuses on assessing program outcomes to determine whether goals have been met and to support changes for individual courses and learners, relating level of achievement to program and organizational benchmarks. Chapter 16 examines the
curriculum data related to individual learners and courses. The outcome is compared to the expected levels of achievement and benchmarks for the program. Chapter 17 examines the processes for using program and course outcome data to analyze and review programs. The goal is to improve programs.

Changing current educational programs and courses or developing new ones can be done using the different chapter information as needed. It is not usually necessary to change entire programs or courses but periodic review is necessary within a rapidly changing healthcare environment. The Internet is a rich resource for similar types of information, samples of documents and reports, and examples of educational offerings based on best practices.

Janice L. McCoy
Marion G. Anema
Share

Fast Facts for Curriculum Development in Nursing: How to Develop and Evaluate Educational Programs, Second Edition
The literature may refer to organizing frameworks as conceptual frameworks, curriculum frameworks, or another term. Regardless of the label, organizing frameworks are a collection of concepts that form a construct in which each concept plays an integral role. Once the program has a mission statement that aligns with the organization’s mission and a program philosophy, it is time to construct an organizing framework. The organizing framework must align with the nursing program philosophy. It is from the nursing program philosophy the major concepts are identified and defined. Although some of the major concepts may reflect the broad student attributes of the organization, such as critical thinking, communication, and computer literacy, they also include concepts specific to the discipline of nursing, such as health, professional skills, and standards of practice. Constructing an organizing framework requires reflection and insight about the discipline.

In this chapter, you will learn:

- Why it is important to have an organizing framework.
- The basic components of an organizing framework.
- How to develop an organizing framework that is congruent with the nursing program philosophy and guides curriculum development.
PURPOSES OF AN ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK

The general purpose of an organizing framework is to create a structure for building the nursing program’s curriculum. The framework isolates the concepts identified in the nursing program philosophy and relates them to standards of practice and employer and consumer expectations. The organizing framework acts as the building blocks or foundation for the curriculum. It provides a frame of reference for members of a discipline to guide their thinking, observations, and interpretations.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Concept**: An idea of something formed by mentally combining all its characteristics.
- **Construct**: The creation of an idea, image, or theory by systematically arranging a number of simple or complex elements.
- **Organizing framework**: A group of concepts that are broadly defined and systematically organized to provide a focus, a rationale, and a tool for the integration and interpretation of information (Wilson et al., 2015). Organizing frameworks also provide a foundation and organization for the educational plan in nursing programs. Frameworks provide a basis for thinking about what we do and about what it means, influenced by the ideas and research of others.

KEY POINTS

An organizing framework establishes the shared vision for the educational program’s efforts in preparing nurses, updating current healthcare providers, or preparing consumers to care for themselves. It provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, student performance, scholarship, service, and program accountability. The organizing framework is knowledge based, articulated, shared, coherent, consistent with the program and institutional missions, and continuously evaluated. It provides the base that describes the program’s intellectual philosophy.

An organizing framework helps explain why the curriculum has been set up in a particular way. It also helps to understand and use the ideas of others who have done similar things.
An organizing framework is used like a travel map. The framework helps educators decide and explain the route to be taken: why certain methods are used to reach a certain point and why others are not used.

In the past, “threads” was the common term used to refer to the identified curriculum organizing themes (concepts). Threads were designated as being either vertical or horizontal. Vertical threads represented the themes (concepts) that were introduced at a lower level and grew or became more complex as learners advanced in the program. An example of a vertical thread would be the roles of the nurse. Most nursing programs expand role functions as the learner progresses through the program; the nursing roles become more complex.

Horizontal threads represent themes (concepts) that are present throughout all courses. Health would be an example of a horizontal thread, since nursing programs often address some aspect of health in all courses.

Some educators use the terms *progressive* and *pervasive* to differentiate between vertical and horizontal threads. Progressive threads serve the same purpose as vertical threads, moving from simple to complex. Likewise, pervasive and horizontal threads are the same; present in every course.

Identification of threads assists in organizing the curriculum. It creates a curricular foundation by weaving the vertical and horizontal threads into a strong fabric.

Identifying the themes (concepts) is more important than labeling them as vertical or horizontal. Designating themes (concepts) as vertical or horizontal at times can seem arbitrary:

- The role of the provider could be labeled horizontal because the provider role is present in all courses.
- Health could move in complexity throughout the program from wellness to acute illness to chronic illness to comorbidity.
Themes come directly from the nursing program philosophy and are referred to as concepts.

The concepts are used as the foundation for the curriculum and help organize and implement the program of study.

Major concepts may have a number of characteristics, which can be designated as subconcepts.

In Chapter 4, the typical elements for a program philosophy were identified (beliefs about nursing, health, recipient of care, and learning) and can be the starting point for identifying additional concepts. Examples of some additional concepts include safety, communication, cultural diversity, collaboration, respect for others, and professional behavior.

Once the organizing concepts have been identified, they must be defined. The definitions will clearly explain to learners, other educators, employers, and consumers what the concepts mean. Typically, the definitions reflect what the educators believe, the industry standards, and employer and consumer expectations. Outside references are often used to strengthen the definitions.

Many organizations have core outcomes for all graduates regardless of program of study. These outcomes, often referred to as student attributes or abilities, may or may not be specific to the nursing program’s philosophy but should be included as concepts within the organizing framework. Examples of organization-wide outcomes include critical thinking, computer literacy, communication (written and verbal), and mathematical computation. In order to demonstrate congruency with the organization’s mission, the broader core outcomes must be included in the organizing concepts or subconcepts for the nursing program.

The organizing framework must clearly demonstrate a flow from the nursing program mission and philosophy. If the concepts have been taken directly from the nursing program philosophy, this flow will be evident.
Before developing a nursing program organizing framework, educators must understand and agree with the nursing program’s philosophy statement. In addition, the educators must be familiar with the core outcomes for all graduates as defined by the organization/parent institution. The concepts for the organizing framework come directly from the nursing program’s philosophy and the organization/parent institution identifies and defines the core outcomes for all graduates. The following activity will assist in identifying the concepts relating to the core outcomes and the critical concepts contained in the nursing program’s philosophy.

Organization/Parent Institution Core Outcomes (Concepts)

Many institutions develop general core outcomes all learners must achieve by graduation. The core student outcomes are an integral component of the organizing framework for all degree programs, including nursing. Core outcomes will vary among institutions, but critical thinking, communication, and mathematical computation are frequent.

Nursing educators must develop nursing program–specific definitions for the institutional core outcomes (concepts) while maintaining congruency with the definitions of the organization/parent institution. Nursing definitions must also be consistent with the nursing program philosophy. Once educators have completed the nursing definitions for all core outcomes, the responses are compiled and the master list is shared. The educators then discuss the master list definitions, formulating one definition that aligns with the general definition of the organization/parent institution and the nursing program’s philosophy. Table 5.1 is an example of how to demonstrate congruency and consistency.

Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Parent Institution Core Outcomes (Concepts)</th>
<th>Organization/Institution Definition of Core Outcomes</th>
<th>Nursing Program Definition</th>
<th>Nursing Program Philosophy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking (example)</td>
<td>Organization/institution definition of “critical thinking”</td>
<td>Nursing program’s definition of “critical thinking”</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy statement(s) that best support the definition of “critical thinking”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Once the educators have agreed on the nursing program definitions for the broader organization/institution core outcomes (concepts), it is time to identify the nursing program concepts. The nursing program concepts should be directly related to and taken from the nursing program philosophy. The most common and frequently used major concepts are nursing, patient (recipient of care), health, environment, and teaching/learning.

Each educator needs to identify the major concepts contained in the program philosophy statement. If there are subconcepts for the major concepts, they should also be listed. A master list of responses is compiled and shared with all educators.

Educators should then discuss all nursing program organizing concepts, narrowing the list down to the major concepts to be used in organizing the curriculum. If concepts are identified at this time that are not in the nursing program philosophy, it may be necessary to return to the philosophy for revision.

Once the educators have agreed upon the major program concepts, they need to develop a definition for each concept. The definitions are compiled into a master list, shared, discussed, and one definition is formulating that aligns with the program philosophy and the organization/institution core outcomes (concepts). Table 5.2 is an

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Parent Institution Core Outcomes (Concepts)</th>
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<th>Nursing Program Definition</th>
<th>Nursing Program Philosophy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication (example)</td>
<td>Organization/institution definition of “communication”</td>
<td>Nursing program’s definition of “communication”</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy statement(s) that best support the definition of “communication”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical computation</td>
<td>Organization/institution definition of “mathematical computation”</td>
<td>Nursing program’s definition of “mathematical computation”</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy statement(s) that best support the definition of “mathematical computation”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nursing Program Organizing Concepts**

Once the educators have agreed on the nursing program definitions for the broader organization/institution core outcomes (concepts), it is time to identify the nursing program concepts. The nursing program concepts should be directly related to and taken from the nursing program philosophy. The most common and frequently used major concepts are nursing, patient (recipient of care), health, environment, and teaching/learning.

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Table 5.2

Nursing Program Organizing Concepts and Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Program Concepts</th>
<th>Subconcepts</th>
<th>Definitions of Major Program Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person (recipient of care)</td>
<td>What subconcepts relate to “person?”</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “person”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>What subconcepts relate to “environment?”</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “environment”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing (nursing practice, standards, and roles)</td>
<td>What subconcepts relate to “nursing?”</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “nursing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>What subconcepts relate to “health?”</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “health”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching/learning</td>
<td>What subconcepts relate to “teaching/learning?”</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “teaching/learning”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

example of how to demonstrate congruency and consistency between program philosophy and concepts/subconcepts.

Fast Facts

- The core outcomes (concepts) of the organization do not have to be addressed separately from the nursing program concepts.
- Subconcepts for the major concepts may be used when mapping the curriculum and should be saved.
- Make sure concepts required by approval or accrediting agencies have been included.

Table 5.3 demonstrates how to align the concepts from a specific program with the broader concepts of the organization. Further refinement of the nursing definitions would be necessary, but the example demonstrates that the core outcomes (concepts) can easily be incorporated into the nursing program concepts.

The aforementioned examples should assist in the development of an organizing framework that is congruent with the nursing program philosophy and the core outcomes of the organization. As with the mission and philosophy statements, organizing frameworks are dynamic and may need to be adjusted depending on internal and/or
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Institution Core Outcomes</th>
<th>Nursing Program’s Philosophy</th>
<th>Nursing Program Major Concepts</th>
<th>Nursing Program Definitions for Core Outcomes and Major Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples: Critical thinking</td>
<td>Statements from the nursing program philosophy that support the major organizing concept.</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “critical thinking”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Statements from the nursing program philosophy that support the major organizing concept.</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “communication”</td>
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<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “nursing”</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “person”</td>
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<td>Environment</td>
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<td>Health</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “health”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
external factors (e.g., practice standards, approval/accrediting agency requirements, employer expectations); therefore, periodic review is necessary. Once the organizing framework has been developed, it is time to develop the program’s educational outcomes.

**Reference**


**Additional Resources**


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### Table 5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Institution Core Outcomes</th>
<th>Nursing Program’s Philosophy</th>
<th>Nursing Program Major Concepts</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statements from the nursing program philosophy that support the major organizing concept.</td>
<td>Teaching and learning</td>
<td>Nursing philosophy definition of “teaching and learning”</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As you have worked through the various elements of a nursing program, you should have noticed the relationship, interaction and interdependence, among all elements. If one element is changed, all elements must be examined to see whether the change affects them. If it does, then revisions must be made to align with any and all changes. Mapping of the concepts and subconcepts from the organizing framework and weaving them into the identified levels will show progression toward achieving the nursing program educational outcomes. Nursing programs with multiple levels find it helpful to use the educational outcomes as a way to better define the performance expectations necessary to progress from one program to the next. Mapping continues to build on previous program elements and helps develop and implement the curriculum; it determines what concepts will be introduced, when they will be introduced, and how each semester is to build on the previous semester’s level expectations. Mapping the curriculum will guide educators with course development, so educational experiences are at an appropriate level and demonstrate progression, reduce duplication, and minimize gaps.

In this chapter, you will learn:

- Why it is important to map the curriculum for a nursing program.
How to map the nursing program curriculum in order to promote learning and achieve the educational outcomes of the program.

PURPOSES OF CURRICULAR MAPPING

- The purpose of a curriculum map is to document the relationship between every component of the curriculum (Zelenitsky et al., 2014). Mapping is used to analyze, plan, and communicate the curriculum. A curriculum map allows educators to review the curriculum for unnecessary redundancies, inconsistencies, misalignments, weaknesses, and gaps.
- Curriculum mapping documents the relationships between the required components of the curriculum and the intended learner outcomes.
- Mapping provides a broad picture of the taught curriculum and is a powerful tool for managing the curriculum.

Definition of Key Terms

- Curriculum mapping is a process for collecting and recording curriculum-related data that identifies core skills and content taught, instructional processes, and assessments used for each concept area and program level. The completed curriculum map becomes a tool that assists educators to track what has been taught and plan for what will be taught.

KEY POINTS

Curriculum mapping clearly demonstrates systems theory principles and concepts. When viewed from a systems perspective, the foundational documents (program mission, philosophy, organizing framework, educational outcomes, and level outcomes) act as subsystems within the program system.

Fast Facts

- Mapping provides a visual depiction of how the subsystems interact and interrelate and how they are interdependent.
Expanding the system to the organization/parent institution level, curriculum mapping also helps identify opportunities for integration of other disciplines (e.g., anatomy, physiology, and English composition; Zelenitsky et al., 2014).

Fast Facts

Curriculum maps should include how general education courses and the broader learner attributes for all graduates link to discipline-specific material.

Curriculum mapping can demonstrate congruency between the intended, delivered, and received curricula. It answers the question, “Is the real curriculum being taught?” Curriculum mapping also helps to identify potential deficiencies in the curriculum and aids in planning assessment activities and developing different models to guide the assessment process for approval/accrediting agencies.

At the program level, curriculum mapping provides a broad picture of how the program intends to achieve its educational outcomes. Using the level outcomes to divide the learning competencies over a specified period of time, it allows for incremental introduction and achievement of knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to accomplish the educational outcomes.

Fast Facts

Curriculum mapping identifies what learners have learned, allowing educators to focus on building on previous knowledge.

Mapping the curriculum using concept maps is an effective way to explain subject matter understanding through a visual approach. The basic structure of major concepts and the visual depiction of the relationships among them can enhance understanding of a specific discipline for both educators and learners.

Curriculum mapping has many benefits:

Curriculum mapping, using the concepts identified in the organizing framework and identifying the dominant relationships among the concepts, further clarifies what learning activities are needed to assist learners in demonstrating achievement of stated outcomes.
In addition to mapping the organizing concepts, curriculum mapping includes the mapping of subconcepts, content, and assessments for all courses, whether preexisting or new.

Curriculum mapping can be a useful process for quality assurance when assessments are designed to measure achievement of the level/educational outcomes.

Curriculum mapping can present evidence of what learners actually learned in their courses rather than assumptions of what was learned based on content presented.

Curriculum mapping can identify gaps or unnecessary redundancies in course learning activities.

Curriculum mapping can demonstrate that learning activities are current, relevant, and taught at the appropriate level, allowing learners to achieve the appropriate educational outcomes level.

Curriculum mapping can demonstrate when a course is taught, appropriateness of course prerequisites, and whether the course is offered in the best semester or professional year of the program.

Curriculum mapping can demonstrate what measures are used to determine whether learners achieved the desired learning outcomes (course, level, and program), how learners are assessed, and whether the assessments align with course and program outcomes.

**Fast Facts**

Curriculum mapping at the course level can demonstrate:
- The instructional methods used
- The balance between acquiring and applying knowledge
- The learning resources and opportunities available
- The level of integration into the curriculum
- The comprehensiveness of the syllabus
- The appropriateness of the learner workload

Narrowing curriculum mapping to the course level allows educators to see where knowledge and skills are incorporated into specific courses. When educators know what knowledge and skills are being taught and where they are placed in the curriculum, educators can design courses that build on previous knowledge and skills.
EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM MAPPING

Preliminary work on curriculum mapping has been accomplished through the identification of major nursing program concepts (organizing framework) and the leveling of educational outcomes by nursing program level, semester level, patient education, or staff development learning program. It is now time to create a more detailed curriculum map for the program or individual offering. Table 8.1 builds on previous chapters and is one example of how to map the broader program curriculum.

Since the level outcomes were used to guide the curricular map, congruency with the mission/philosophy statements, organizing framework, and educational outcomes of the program and practice standards for the discipline should have been maintained. Congruency has been demonstrated and presented in Tables 3.1 through 7.1; therefore, it is not necessary to keep repeating this information, but it is important to maintain consistency and congruency to previous organization/institutional/nursing program alignment. Essential knowledge and competencies need to be identified for all level outcomes.

Nursing Program Curriculum Mapping

The example in Table 8.1 will assist educators in mapping the curriculum for a nursing program or an individual offering while maintaining congruency with the program mission/philosophy and organizing framework and with the organization/parent institution’s mission and philosophy. Computer programs exist that can simplify the creation of a visual curricular map, but the data entry is still the responsibility of each nursing educator.

The simplest way to approach the task of mapping the curriculum is to use the major organizing concepts and the level outcomes developed in previous chapters.

The steps for mapping a curriculum are as follows:

- Using the level outcomes, request educators list all subconcepts and content for each level that contributes to the learners’ achievement of the stated level outcome. Remember, the focus is not on content but on what learners must know, understand, and/or do to achieve the outcome.
- Compile a master list of all educator-identified subconcepts and content. Educators should discuss all proposed subconcepts and content using the master list striving for agreement on consistency.
with the major concept, whether the difficulty level is appropriate for the level/learner outcome or whether the level/learner outcome needs to be revised. If additional concepts are identified at this time that are not in the program’s organizing framework, it may be necessary to return to all previous program documents for revision.

- Finalize the list of subconcepts and content, creating a comprehensive list that identifies the necessary knowledge and competencies learners must accomplish in order to meet the stated level/learner outcomes. The comprehensive list will guide educators in developing courses that assist learners in meeting the stated level/learner outcome. If courses already exist, comparing the comprehensive list to what is currently being taught should identify gaps, redundancies, and the level of difficulty issues.

At this point, some educators may prefer developing concept maps that show the relationships between concepts and subconcepts and how they link the curriculum together within a course, semester, professional year, and/or the entire program.

Table 8.1 provides an example of curricular mapping. If read from left to right, it can be quickly determined whether a concept is being addressed adequately to achieve the stated level outcome and develops the necessary foundation for the learner to meet subsequent level outcomes.

Table 8.1  
Example of Program Mapping With Two Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizing Concept With Corresponding Educational Outcome</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Outcome: Communication End-of-program performance and knowledge expectation</td>
<td>Beginning performance/knowledge necessary to progress to Level 2. <strong>Knowledge:</strong> List necessary knowledge areas required for success. Subconcepts identified earlier should be incorporated here. <strong>Competencies:</strong> List necessary skills required for success.</td>
<td>Additional performance/knowledge necessary to meet Level 2 outcomes, thus meeting educational outcomes. <strong>Knowledge:</strong> List necessary knowledge areas required for success. <strong>Competencies:</strong> List necessary skills required for success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
### Table 8.1

#### Example of Program Mapping With Two Levels (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizing Concept With Corresponding Educational Outcome</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Outcome: Critical Thinking</strong></td>
<td>Beginning performance/ knowledge necessary to progress to Level 2. <strong>Knowledge:</strong> List necessary knowledge areas required for success. Subconcepts identified earlier should be incorporated here. <strong>Competencies:</strong> List necessary skills required for success.</td>
<td>Additional performance/ knowledge necessary to meet Level 2 outcomes, thus meeting educational outcomes. <strong>Knowledge:</strong> List necessary knowledge areas required for success. <strong>Competencies:</strong> List necessary skills required for success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Outcome: Mathematical Computation</strong></td>
<td>Beginning performance/ knowledge necessary to progress to Level 2. <strong>Knowledge:</strong> List necessary knowledge areas required for success. Subconcepts identified earlier should be incorporated here. <strong>Competencies:</strong> List necessary skills required for success.</td>
<td>Additional performance/ knowledge necessary to meet Level 2 outcomes, thus meeting educational outcomes. <strong>Knowledge:</strong> List necessary knowledge areas required for success. <strong>Competencies:</strong> List necessary skills required for success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Outcome: Person</strong></td>
<td>Beginning performance/ knowledge necessary to progress to Level 2. <strong>Knowledge:</strong> List necessary knowledge areas required for success. Subconcepts identified earlier should be incorporated here. <strong>Competencies:</strong> List necessary skills required for success.</td>
<td>Additional performance/ knowledge necessary to meet Level 2 outcomes, thus meeting educational outcomes. <strong>Knowledge:</strong> List necessary knowledge areas required for success. <strong>Competencies:</strong> List necessary skills required for success.</td>
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</table>
### Table 8.1

**Example of Program Mapping With Two Levels (continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizing Concept With Corresponding Educational Outcome</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Outcome:</strong> Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-of-program performance and knowledge expectation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List necessary knowledge areas required for success.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Subconcepts identified earlier should be incorporated here.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Competencies:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>List necessary skills required for success.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional performance/ knowledge necessary to meet Level 2 outcomes, thus meeting educational outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List necessary knowledge areas required for success.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Competencies:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List necessary skills required for success.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Outcome:</strong> Nursing</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-of-program performance and knowledge expectation</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Competencies:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>List necessary skills required for success.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Outcome:</strong> Health</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-of-program performance and knowledge expectation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>List necessary skills required for success.</td>
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</table>
Consistent with systems thinking, curricular maps are dependent on previous program elements and may need to be adjusted depending on changes in internal factors (e.g., changes in mission/philosophy statements with either the organization or program, changes in the organizing framework or the educational outcomes) and external factors (e.g., changes in practice standards, approval/accrediting standards, employer expectations); therefore, the curricular maps require periodic review. Once the “big picture” of mapping the curriculum has been completed, program courses need to be developed or existing courses revised so that they are consistent with the broader curricular map. Learner outcomes for each course must contribute to the accomplishment of the level outcomes. As new or revised courses are added to the curricular map, the focus becomes narrower with the identification of detailed knowledge and competencies required for learners to accomplish the course outcomes.

Educators are typically responsible for program/curriculum activities; therefore, educator development is an important element for creating and managing successful nursing programs. The next chapter explores the importance of educator development activities to ensure program success.

**Table 8.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizing Concept With Corresponding Educational Outcome</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Outcome:</strong> Teaching/learning End-of-program performance and knowledge expectation</td>
<td>Beginning performance/knowledge necessary to progress to Level 2. Knowledge: List necessary knowledge areas required for success. Subconcepts identified earlier should be incorporated here. Competencies: List necessary skills required for success.</td>
<td>Additional performance/knowledge necessary to meet Level 2 outcomes, thus meeting educational outcomes. Knowledge: List necessary knowledge areas required for success. Competencies: List necessary skills required for success.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Reference


Additional Resources
