

The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner More than Unit Planning

By **Bill Beaucage**, Principal

St. Hilary Catholic School, Superior North CDSB

A few years ago, CPCO requested principals to volunteer as workshop presenters for a new software product, *The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner*, developed by the Ministry of Education. This software has become my professional electronic partner and I have facilitated face-to-face workshops with participants from school boards across Ontario. I continue to facilitate web-conferences with aspiring administrators enrolled in the Principal's Qualification Program. *The Planner* is a powerful and effective tool that I use in my professional practice as an elementary principal. It has provided resources for me with all stakeholders.

Think about the challenges you face daily in your school as an elementary or secondary principal or vice-principal; supervision, discipline, drop-in visitors, parents, scheduling, staffing, maintenance, teacher performance appraisal, new teacher induction program, and other ministry initiatives. As principals, we wear a variety of leadership hats each day. We are community leaders, administrative leaders, operational leaders, strategic leaders, spiritual/faith leaders as well as instructional and curriculum leaders. Many distracters get in the way of what should be our principal role, curriculum leaders.

The Planner is a resource that will not add to present workload and responsibilities, but will support you as an instructional and curriculum leader. *The Planner* offers a unique opportunity to move our leadership into action with our staffs. *The Planner's* benefits will filter into classroom practice and may result in improved student achievement.

The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner is a resource library that can be installed on Windows and MacIntosh computers. The CD was distributed to boards through the Ontario Educational Software Service (OESS). All Ontario educators may install *The Planner* on home computers according to the Ministry license. It is a powerful and effective data warehouse, available with a few clicks of the mouse button.

School instructional leadership requires that principals have knowledge of policy, assessment and evaluation practices, up-to-date pedagogical and instructional practices as well as other resources at our disposal. *The Planner* contains a comprehensive library of resources neatly packaged into categories called "companions", which contain a wealth of information on special education, assessment, English as a second language and a multitude of teaching and learning strategies. There are also policy resources, including the original and revised curriculum

expectations, assessment and evaluation resources and exemplars for both elementary and secondary curricula. As well, there are other resources that reference numerous educational sites, Ministry licensed software and a growing library of Catholic and public elementary curriculum units and secondary course profiles.

There are many features and applications within *The Planner* that make it a very useful software tool. I use sections of various companions at staff meetings and professional learning team meetings to initiate and focus professional discussions around sound instructional practice, special education issues, assessment and evaluation. *The Planner* is an effective resource to support school improvement planning. I use the copy and paste features to complete teacher performance appraisals. I use sections in *The Planner* with new teachers who are in the new teacher induction program. The special education companion is a support for working with exceptional students, developing IEPs and for use in IPRC meetings. It is a database to inform teachers in the areas of assessment policy and practice, program planning, and reporting student achievement. It contains descriptions of several recording devices and assessment strategies. *The Planner* has a speedy find function that assists users to search for specific instructional practices, resources, information, or student tasks linked to Ontario curriculum expectations.

The Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner also has its own website! This website gathers and coordinates a significant number of resources and features. There are approximately 150 elementary curriculum units and 19 partial secondary course profiles. With a mouse click, your web catalogue is quickly updated and you have access to the latest and most up-to-date information on units of study and course profiles for download. Principals and vice-principals who access website units and course profiles are supportive partners for new teachers, teachers with new grade assignments or those with combined grades. From this website, administrators have access to training slides and resource documents for individual and professional learning team use.

Take some time today to look around your school or office for this valuable and useful resource or contact your OESS representative at your board office to obtain a copy. If you are interested in participating in a workshop or web-conference that will take you or your local principal association on a tour of the *Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner*, contact Nelly Kelders, Program and PQP Coordinator at 1-888-621-9190 ext. 38 or by e-mail: nkelders@cpco.on.ca.