

**Discipline-Based Design**

Discipline-based content design option focuses on a strict interpretation of the disciplines with separate subjects in separate time blocks during the school day. No attempt at integration is made; in fact, it is avoided.

Traditional approaches to subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, music, art, and physical education are the usual fare. In secondary programs, these general academic and arts areas break down into more specific fields, such as algebra under mathematics, or American history under social studies. There are some variations of block scheduling and the way the week of cycle is programmed. Nevertheless, knowledge is presented in separate fields without a deliberate attempt to show the relationships among them.

**Parallel Disciplines Design**

When the curriculum is designed in parallel fashion, teachers sequence their lessons to correspond to lessons in the same area in other disciplines. For example, if the social studies teacher teaches a World War II unit in the beginning of the spring semester, then the English teacher will reschedule her autumn book, *Summer of My German Soldier*, to coincide with the social studies unit. The content itself does not change, only the order in which it appears. The goal is a simultaneous effect as students relate the studies in one subject with the others. Teachers working in a parallel fashion are not deliberately connecting curriculum across fields of knowledge; they are simply re-sequencing their existing curriculum in the hopes that students will find the implicit linkages.

**Interdisciplinary Design**

In this design, periodic units or courses of study deliberately bring together the full range of disciplines in the school's curriculum: language arts, math, social studies, and science, and the arts, music, and physical education. The main point is that designers attempt to use a full array of discipline-based perspectives. The units are of specific duration: a few days, a few weeks, or a semester. This option does not purport to replace the discipline-field approach; rather, they are mutually supportive.

**Multidisciplinary Design**

The multidisciplinary option suggests that certain related disciplines be brought together in a formal unit or course to investigate a theme or issue. It is different from parallel teaching, where the focus stays on the prescribed scope and sequence of each discipline. A good analogy is a colour wheel and the notion of complimentary colours. Just as groups of colours compliment one another, certain disciplines are directly related to one another, such as the humanities. Of course, it is possible to design a course that brings together two disciplines of seemingly different characters – as long as the questions shed light on and compliment one another (as in a course on “Ethics in Science”).

**Integrated-Day Design**

This mode is based primarily on themes and problems emerging from the child's world. The emphasis is on an organic approach to classroom life that focuses the curriculum on the child's questions and interests rather than on content determined by a school or state syllabus. The approach originated in the British Infant School movement in the '60s and is most commonly seen in the United States in preschools and kindergarten programs.

**Field-Based Program**

This approach is the most extreme form of interdisciplinary work. Students live in the school environment and create the curriculum out of their day-to-day lives. Perhaps A.S. Neil's Summerhill is the most widely known example of such an approach. Students who are interested in the buildings on campus might study architecture. If there were a conflict between students concerning ways to behave in the school, they could study rules of government. This is a totally integrated program because the student's life is synonymous with school.

*Source:* Jacobs H. H., ed. (1989). *Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation* (pp. 14-18). Alexandria, VA: ASCD