



Lessons from Grandma's Cookies: Translating Principles into Practices

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As we are looking at translating principles into practices in the school, we've continually come back to a metaphor from an early training while we were working on developing the marks and principles. We often look at biblical worldview integration like baking a cookie (or a biscuit if you are outside the USA). We use the metaphor because of an experience one of us had with our grandmother's cookie baking. Grandma doesn't bake cookies just because she likes baking cookies. She knows freshly baked cookies have a positive emotional effect on her family. Freshly baked cookies in the kitchen invite conversation as the family is drawn by the smell to the home's epicenter of good vibes. Those cookies become a symbol of comfort, a conversation starter, a means for Grandma to assess the mood of the family and perhaps prevent a problem from becoming worse. These situations reveal to her what to pray for and which questions to ask in order to move each family member towards Christ and towards each other. Now Grandma can use other means to get at these questions and concerns, but she understands the power of those cookies to bring the family together and keep it centered. Now, before Grandma begins to bring the family together through cookies, she needs to gather the ingredients.

There are a set of fixed, necessary ingredients to make cookies. If those essential ingredients are missing, they cease to be cookies. Grandma, who is a master baker, knows the difference between what is essential and what is optional. Chocolate chips, raisins, macadamia nuts, cranberries, sprinkles, are not necessary for a cookie to be a cookie. Flour, sugar, butter/fat, eggs, salt, baking powder, and heat are all necessary. If you remove any one of these, it might have the form of a cookie, but it might not taste like a cookie; it is not just something that smells wonderful or appeals to the eye. It is also possible for all the ingredients to be present tasting like a cookie but not having the form of one.

Grandma begins her journey towards ensuring the bond of her family by gathering all of the necessary ingredients. She then mixes them together in the right proportion and in the right order. If Grandma mixes everything together in the bowl in any other proportion, then there is no guarantee that cookies will emerge. Imagine if Grandma added three times as much baking soda or too much salt, what emerges may look like a cookie, but it certainly will not taste like one! The recipe informs the necessary ingredients, the proportion, the order to mix or prepare, the time needed to fuse together, and the time needed to cool.

The Authentic Christian Educator Model is more of a recipe than a rubric. Yes, it can be used as a rubric to evaluate whether you have all of the ingredients, but if that is all that it is used for, it falls short of the ultimate aim. Just like Grandma's cookies facilitate conversations with the family, AuCE facilitates Spiritual Formation. But to get there, the Christian school and educator must have all of the right ingredients, in the right proportion. Then there must be time to let it bake together, cool, and then serve.

Gathering and Mixing the Ingredients

What are the essential ingredients of Biblical Worldview Integration using the AuCE "recipe"?

1. Mission, vision, and core values of the school and educators are **aligned with Scripture**. (Aim)
2. The school has developed a **Spiritual formation Plan**. (Proclaim)
3. The foundational documents express clear **biblically-aligned support** for the home and the school. (Proclaim)
4. The school has developed clear expectations for staff (or **expected staff outcomes**). (Proclaim)
5. The school hires **missional-aligned staff**. (Proclaim)
6. The school has developed an institution-wide **philosophy of education statement**. (Prepare)
7. The school has developed or adopted a set of **core worldview questions**. (Prepare)
8. The school has developed or adopted a set of **Bible truths** that answer those core worldview questions. (Prepare)
9. The school has developed or adopted a **biblical philosophy** for each **subject/discipline**. (Prepare)
10. There is an institution-wide professional development plan that trains teachers in **instructional** strategies and staff in role-specific best practices. (Prepare)
11. There is an institution-wide professional development plan that trains all staff in **discipleship** strategies. (Cultivate)
12. There is an institution-wide professional development plan that trains all staff in developing a **spiritual growth plan**? (Live)

These twelve foundational action steps are both the ingredients and the recipe. The order in which we think and apply these is essential. From **clear** mission to **hiring** for the mission to **equipping** those on mission.

The beauty of this model is that schools can add the contextual flavor they want to the palette of the constituents they serve, so long as the essentials are present and the recipe is followed in the right order. However, we must not lose sight of the ultimate goal: spiritual formation. Yes, Grandma may have spent hours preparing cookies, leaving a messy kitchen, but the smiles on those glad faces of her loved ones enjoying those delicious delicacies are all worth the effort,

ultimately opening the door to a deeper relationship between Grandma, her family, and ultimately for Christ.

Applying the Heat

Once the essential ingredients are gathered in their right proportion and in their right order, it must be baked at the right temperature and then allowed to cool. The baking process in applying the AuCE model is in the rhythms and practices of the school. Once there's clarity on the foundational elements, these must be turned into policies, procedures, and practices. This may also be considered the disciplines that an organization undertakes together to become a unified whole that moves together towards the vision of the school. Putting sound biblical principles into practice builds over time a solid Christ-centered culture.

So rather than representing the principles and practices as a rubric, it is better to look at it as a recipe. It can also be represented (as in the diagram below) as laying a foundation of interconnected principles with the practices of the organization resting on top, anchored to those foundational elements.

The Right Cooks in the Kitchen

This model also informs who should be at the core of putting these foundational elements in place. It is less about role and more about expertise at this stage. At a minimum, an executive administrator (president, superintendent, head of school, or assistant head of school, or principal), the spiritual life director (a Bible teacher, a campus or local pastor, or equivalent in expertise or responsibilities), and a curriculum director (or anyone overseeing the implementation of curriculum and professional learning) are needed. This can obviously be expanded within the categories: adding divisional principals to the executive administrator role and athletic directors. Bible teachers or counselors can be added to the spiritual life aspect, and divisional lead teachers can be added to the curriculum director group.

Biblical Worldview Integration is a Team Sport

Once all the right people are on board, it's crucial to allocate sufficient time for an in-depth evaluation of the existing school system (the ingredients) and identifying the gaps that need to be filled. Once those missing elements are determined, then the applicable group should be assigned to gather (or work on) the missing elements. For example, if a spiritual formation plan is already in place, but there isn't a school-wide philosophy of education, then the curriculum director group might be tasked with drafting a document that articulates an institution-wide perspective with recommended practices. If a school has a philosophy of education, but doesn't have a spiritual formation plan, then the spiritual life group should be set to developing a plan accordingly. If a biblical philosophy of a subject is needed, then the curriculum director can appoint a group of lead teachers to work alongside the Bible teachers to draft those subject-

level statements of philosophy. Configurations of these working groups or task forces will vary based on the size of the school and the flexibility of time and resources. It is this very exercise of evaluating the principles and practices with the practitioners within the school that creates the conditions for true biblical worldview integration to occur as they (the staff) develop unity of mind in their shared purpose strengthened through a common language. While it may be expedient to copy what another school is doing or take a system off the shelf, each school, if it is to be contextually faithful, must at some point go through the time-consuming rigor of inviting key aspects of the school community to develop these principles and practices together and ensure practices are in place to evaluate them at appropriate times to ensure their faithful and relevant application. When a community of educators does this, they are genuinely who they are because they have thought deeply about what God has called them to do in the time, space, and place he has given them. They are not trying to be like anyone else. They are true to their specific and unique calling. They are authentic!

Eliminate, Reduce, Elevate, Create, and Celebrate: Starting Point for Implementation

Good, solid implementation isn't about adding more work or time; it's about evaluating your time usage to identify what can be eliminated or reduced to make way for more important tasks. If you already have a professional development plan, assess its use. Is there a way to allocate some of that time for planning around the missing elements of the model? Perhaps you don't use all the time during traditional planning meetings. Could you designate a portion of that time for brainstorming? If you realize you need more time, judiciously, with the consent of your key staff members, create more space. This ensures that those involved don't perceive this as just another task but a necessity that demands additional time beyond your regular cadence. Amidst all this change management, it's crucial that leaders remain positive, supportive champions of this work. Changing our approach to something deeply ingrained in our psyche can feel like repeatedly climbing seven flights of stairs, but it can be achieved with a consistent reminder of the "why" behind it. This is about the students and parents who fill our parking lots, classrooms, fields, courts, workshops, theaters, and nurseries. Therefore, elevate what truly matters and ensure it's at the forefront of all involved in the process. Leaders: Remove unnecessary obstacles to implementation and leave the rest to the Lord. Oh, and be sure to celebrate what you are already doing well. It is a lot more than you think!

