

LPA BOARD, FACULTY REV UP CURRICULUM

By Betsy Lehman

Curriculum development is one of the most critical, challenging and rewarding activities going on "behind the scenes" at Lighthouse Preparatory Academy. So says Stephanie Herrick, LPA board member and director of curricula. She and fellow board members and faculty are particularly busy right now evaluating existing curricula and gearing up with new ideas for next school year. Herrick pointed out that, "because of the unique structure of LPA - three days in classes and two days of study at home - appropriate and adaptable curriculum is especially critical." First and foremost, she said, it needs to be challenging and relevant for the student. It must also meet the classroom needs of the teacher and be adaptable enough to encourage involvement by parents at home, who are considered the vital third link in the school's philosophy of a three-way partnership - student, teacher, parent - in education.

In addition, because Lighthouse is a non-denominational Christian school, the curriculum, Herrick said, "must be in agreement with our Christian statement of faith." She explained, "This does not mean, however, that our students are 'sheltered' from differing world views, but rather that they are well-informed and well-grounded in their own beliefs and are therefore able to defend their faith. For this reason LPA includes classes such as Old and New Testament Survey, Ethics and Apologetics, Critical Thinking and Classical Rhetoric among its course offerings.

Curriculum development of the more academic subjects involves many factors. Herrick researches course objectives and materials used at other schools - public and private, traditional and non-traditional - and plays close attention to what guidelines and recommendations need to be followed for the state of Missouri. She also has to consider the entrance requirements of numerous colleges and universities and how they view particular high- school course material.

Once all that is determined, the search for materials begins. Some course subjects, such as math, work best with traditional textbooks, while other classes use a different approach. In eighth grade history, for example, students are reading a variety of books - biographies, non-fiction, historical-fiction, and so forth - that bring history to life.

"This is one of the most exciting facets of education at LPA," Herrick said, adding: "Of course, we (as board members and teachers) could make our job easy and just select a cookie-cutter program for every grade and subject area, but we're really about excellence for the students - not ease for ourselves. We look at what materials exist that will best fit our particular model and goals, and then we hope that with proper selection and implementation in the classroom, and at home, the students will be the winners."

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