

Audio-Visual Education in Action

DOROTHY BLACKWELL

VISUAL EDUCATION has been graduated, cum laude, from its preparatory period of experiment and error to a vital role in public school education. It has also passed with flying colors an exacting post-graduate course under the stern tutelage of war. The outstanding success of visual education in the armed services educational programs points the way to the increasing use of visual mediums in the future, but even before the war visual programs had proved their effectiveness. They are no longer regarded merely as entertainment, as a reward for good behavior, or as a sugar-coated subterfuge to discourage Johnny's mischief-making.

In the St. Louis Public Schools teaching films and the other visual aids are recognized as essential to modern teaching and as a medium through which the objectives of public school education may be achieved.

A Matter of Approach

What these objectives are, in St. Louis or in any school system, depends largely upon the basic teaching philosophy of the individual teachers and principals. It follows then that the use made of visual materials and the results obtained are predicated upon whether modern democratic procedures or policies of regimentation and tradition guide the daily classroom work.

If the teachers believe that children should be trained to think for themselves, to plan research, to discuss problems intelligently, and to make their own decisions, the modern visual teaching aids

offer an unsurpassed means of mental stimulation. When teachers and students alike are imbued with this spirit of inquiry and appraisal and understand the importance of facts in underwriting opinions, they will receive far more benefit from visual education than is possible when the students' assignments are merely to memorize answers to academic questions.

A Program Takes Shape

The St. Louis Public Schools have pioneered in visual education. In 1905 when the St. Louis Educational Museum was established, it was one of the first institutions of its kind in the country. As the value of the audio-visual program was proven by experience in St. Louis classrooms and the demand for audio-visual teaching aids increased, the museum was expanded into the Division of Audio-Visual Education.

Recognizing the importance of gearing visual materials to fit the varied needs and purposes of a modern curriculum, the superintendent of instruction of the St. Louis Public Schools appointed a Visual Education Committee, composed of representatives from the various teaching departments, to work with the staff of the Division of Audio-Visual Education. The committee cooperates in the selection of new materials most valuable for classroom use and participates in formulating policies for the visual education program in the schools. Guidance in the development of important policies is offered by the assistant superintendent in charge of instruction and research.

Learning Aids Are in the Budget

During the last school year the committee and the Division of Audio-Visual Education made a thorough survey of the St. Louis system's visual materials and projection equipment and the anticipated needs for the future. To provide for the orderly, progressive development of the audio-visual program and to meet existing requirements of the teachers, the committee recommended the adoption by the Board of Education of a progressive visual education program to be completed over a four-year period at a cost of approximately \$135,000. The committee also recommended that the Board make specific budgetary provisions for the acquisition of additional visual aids and equipment. At its July meeting the Board authorized the adoption of a budget covering the committee's recommendations for 1944-45.

One of the important duties of the Visual Education Committee is to cooperate with the staff of the Division of Audio-Visual Education in the selection of visual aids and in the program of classroom use. Teachers with special training in visual education are assigned to the staff to assist the director in developing the effective use of visual teaching materials in the schools. Upon request the staff members visit the schools, work with

faculty groups and individual teachers, and serve as consultants regarding the use of films, film strips, and other teaching devices. The staff specialists also work with in-service training and student-teacher classes at the two teachers colleges of the public schools and aid individual teachers who visit the Division of Audio-Visual Education for help on specific problems.

What You Need, When You Need It

Effective utilization of visual teaching materials depends upon having them available at the time they fit the interests and assignments of the students. All of the visual materials available for classroom use are described in a catalog compiled by the Division of Audio-Visual Education and published by the Board of Education. Every teacher in the St. Louis system has a copy of the catalog. Orders for visual materials are assembled in each school building by one teacher who is designated as the key person in the distribution of materials in that school.

To enable the Division of Audio-Visual Education to make deliveries promptly, the Board of Education maintains two delivery trucks assigned exclusively to the Division. Deliveries are made to every school in St. Louis once each week. Teachers are requested to mail their orders to the Division at least forty-eight hours in advance of delivery. Thus a teacher, as she plans her work for the next week, may decide what materials will be most suitable and is not required to prepare her order for visual aids weeks in advance of their use.

From the inception of visual education in St. Louis, it has been the policy of the Division to provide as great a variety of visual materials and teaching aids as possible. As a result of this policy, rigidly

How a place was won for audio-visual aids in the public schools of a large American city is described by Dorothy Blackwell, assistant in the St. Louis Division of Audio-Visual Education. Miss Blackwell traces the growth of the St. Louis program from its small beginnings in 1905 as an educational museum to its present position of prestige. Recently, the Board of Education adopted the first year's budget of a four-year financial plan totaling \$135,000. She discusses the actual organization of the St. Louis staff and touches briefly on the philosophy underlying wise use of audio and visual materials.

maintained throughout the years, the Division's catalog today features such diversified materials as foreign dolls in costume, collections of articles illustrating the life and customs of the American Indians, the Chinese, and the early American settlers. Teachers have available collections of mounted birds and mammals, insects, and reptiles. Children may study food products, rocks, minerals, and industrial collections, and have available the scientific apparatus for simple experiments. As far as possible all visual materials are distributed so that the children may handle the individual objects and study them closely for detail.

Audio and Visual Aids Combine for Effective Teaching

Teachers are urged to correlate the use of educational films with other audio-visual aids, including film strips, lantern slides, photographs, booklets, charts, framed pictures, phonograph records, and

radio transcriptions. All of these materials are available through the Division of Audio-Visual Education.

The Division is preparing to encourage the use of radio programs during the coming year as another type of correlation of visual and audio materials. The responsibility for the development of the program of radio education has been placed in the Division of Audio-Visual Education, which is working with the Committee on Radio Education, recently appointed by the superintendent of instruction.

Two fundamentals govern the basic policy of audio-visual education in the St. Louis schools. One is to make the most effective use possible of the audio-visual teaching aids now available. The other is to be constantly on the alert for new materials and teaching techniques which will help provide the understanding necessary to solve the problems of an everchanging, dynamic civilization.

◀ *Our sailors' sights are high*

Training Aids Step Up Navy Instruction_____

A PRIME OBJECTIVE of all armed forces training is "Maximum Learning in Minimum Time." To attain this objective, the services are increasingly turning to audio-visual instructional tools commonly called *training aids*.

In the Navy the aids have been written into the various curricula, and directives have been issued whereby training officers and instructors *must* use them at the appropriate time and in ways that are based upon proved instructional techniques. Training aids, as defined by the armed

forces, include motion picture training films, sound and silent slide films, slides, mock-ups, models, exhibits, simulated training devices, posters, photographs, recordings, and radio.

Results of Use

While, to date, little detailed evidence bearing on specific results of their use has been released to the general public, the comments of thousands of hard-boiled Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard officers and men clearly attest their

Copyright © 1944 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.