

We Measure Growth Together

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Evaluation should be regarded as part and parcel of the learning process. To this end, teachers and children plan together and evaluate learning experiences. This article, by Raymond J. Free, coordinator, Language Arts, Orange Public Schools, Orange, Tex., illustrates one way of adapting this particular point of view toward planning in one area of the curriculum.

FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS conventional testing has been the principal method of evaluating pupil learning. Today evaluation, more comprehensive, determines effectiveness of the program in relation to the accomplishment of objectives set up cooperatively between pupils and teacher. For the pupils this procedure requires numerous opportunities for growth and criteria by which they can measure their own development.

The Orange (Tex.) schools have had a tremendous task in keeping the educational horizons in juxtaposition with the expansion of the town. From a prewar population of 10,000, Orange advanced to a war peak of 60,000 and is now leveling off to an industrial population of 40,000. With a student body increasing at an average rate of 50 per cent yearly, evaluation became an integral part of a dynamic program.

Workshops Gauge the Year's Work

Before 1942, curriculum work was done during the school year, but rapid expansion necessitated the organization of summer workshops to crystallize evaluations made during the year. In 1942 at the University of Texas, and in 1943 and 1944 in Orange, instructional workshops and curriculum laboratories provided a medium through

which professional direction and leadership were furnished in development and revision of basic curricular, instructional, and administrative materials and procedures; in development and improvement of special materials to be used in meeting emergency needs; in the preparation of new materials of instruction and administrative procedures; in the preparation of teaching materials for use by substitute, inexperienced, and out-of-practice teachers. Likewise the workshops provided a medium through which individual teachers enrolled in professional training courses for advanced standing or refreshment.

One area of learning in which teachers became interested was the language arts. Among the consultants was one specialist who aided the teachers in building a program answering the pupils' problems, serving their needs, intensifying and extending their interests; and in making teachers more conscious of the fundamental values inherent in language arts and the psychology of language. As an outgrowth of the 1945 workshop at the University of Denver, teachers prepared a brochure, "Teaching English As a Communication Art," outlining clinical methods for the improvement of reading, writing, and speech behavior. Consultants helped the group to evaluate

language arts in terms of the principles of general semantics for word-fact relationship in human reactions.

Bulletins Preserve Evaluations

To make the total program available to teachers who do not attend workshops, bulletins outlining each year's work are prepared. Since 1942 some bulletins have had several revisions or rewritings. At the present time the language arts department is using nine curriculum bulletins. The following are illustrative:

New Worlds: A Communication Program for Grade Ten

Knowing Ourselves and Our Neighbors: A Communication Program for Grade Seven

The bulletins are based on the principle that the first function of language is to prepare pupils for speaking, writing, reading, listening, observing, and thinking. These goals are accomplished through such activities as conversation and group discussion, informal talks and meetings, writing letters and reports, taking notes and preparing outlines, listening to radio broadcasts and attending motion pictures, reading newspapers, periodicals, and books.

For each grade are suggested units with reading, a theme in literature, or the personal experiences of the pupils as the core. Oral and written composition becomes purposeful when it is based on the reading or the personal experiences of the pupils. Writing and speaking show the need for instruction in grammar and usage. Each integrated unit thus becomes a fusion of oral and written expression, of listening and reading. From purposeful effort to communicate significant ideas and experi-

ences, pupils discover their individual needs for instrumental grammar, and instruction becomes either individual or small group.

Each unit contains criteria by which the teacher and pupil can measure accomplishments. As each unit progresses, pupils make self-evaluations. Unit tests and examinations contain sections on general evaluation in which the pupils write why they enjoyed particular activities; what phases of language arts they showed most and least improvement in; what suggestions they have concerning the next unit; whether they would like emphasis on individual work, a class project, or committee work.

At the end of the unit, there is a general looking back to evaluate progress as very poor, poor, fair, good, or excellent and to determine what activities may need emphasis in the future. A typical list to check the various experiences of pupils at the end of the year includes such items as:

LISTENING

1. Conversation and telephoning
2. Discussions
3. Reports
4. Directions and announcements
5. Story telling and dramatizing
6. Poetry and choral speaking
7. Oral reading
8. Introductions
9. Class or assembly programs
10. The radio in school and home
11. Recordings and transcriptions
12. "Broadcasting" by pupils

SPEAKING

1. Panel discussions
2. Reports
3. Book reviews
4. Interviewing
5. Oral reading (poetry and prose)
6. Telephoning and conversations
7. Introductions

8. Current events discussions
9. Program or assembly (to an audience)
10. Group verse speaking
11. Reports
12. Announcements
13. Informal discussions
14. Story telling
15. Meetings
16. Speeches
17. Dramatizations

THINKING, MAKING CRITICAL JUDGMENTS

1. Evaluating motion pictures, radio programs, newspaper and magazine stories and articles
2. Making decisions
3. Discussing controversial issues (intercultural education)
4. Determining a word's meaning from context
5. Discovering shifts of meaning for the same word
6. Detecting what the author means by using a figure of speech

EXPRESSING CLEARLY AND EFFECTIVELY

1. Sentences
 - a. Complete
 - b. Kinds
2. Subjects and predicates
3. Nouns and adjectives
4. Verbs and adverbs
5. Capitalization
6. Punctuation
7. Paragraphing
8. Spelling
9. Handwriting

Language Arts Cut Across

How the language arts program cuts across subject boundaries may best be shown by the speech program. In addition to oral activities in language arts classes and to regular classes in speech, a special workshop enables speech teachers to give training in dramatic expression to pupils in language arts classes. The occasions for such programs are play studied in class or original skits

written in class. Students are taken from language arts classes for a given time to rehearse the skit. The skit is presented before the class, other classes studying the same selection, or other groups, depending upon the merit of the performance. All students are thus given an opportunity to participate in a wide variety of speech activities, in which emphasis is on personality growth and development rather than on a highly polished performance.

The language arts teachers, the librarian, and the counselors work together to stimulate the free reading program and to use this program not only for learning and recreational experiences for the pupil but as a means for guidance. The aim is to stimulate the pupil's desire to read and to provide ample time for him to read at school.

As a contribution to nutrition education, language arts classes made a survey of the eating habits of hundreds of school children, of their food preferences, of the kinds of lunches selected in the lunchroom, and the cost of these lunches. News articles, oral reports, group discussions, and dramatic skits about nutrition problems in school and home grew out of these surveys.

In one unit on "The History of Orange," pupils in language arts classes wrote histories of the town based on information secured from all their classes: homeroom programs—the early history and first settlements; social studies—transportation, city government, natural resources; science—industries; mathematics—graphs; art—illustrations.

Since all departments have assumed responsibility for teaching reading in a developmental program, the teachers

of science, mathematics, and social studies consult with language arts teachers concerning reading techniques and skills and the development of vocabulary. Through the continued crossing of departmental lines American history has been better correlated with American literature. The use of social studies and science textbooks as readers for a unit such as "The Air Age" makes the language arts program more flexible. A static program would not require evaluation but a changing program in which language arts becomes an integral part of the total curriculum requires continuous evaluation.

Frequent meetings during the year aid the teachers in planning work, in interpreting test results, and in devising changes and improvements for the units. Meetings provide for professional growth and the sharing of ideas. Supervision is largely the evaluation of experimental units developed during the years and suggestions by which major objectives can be attained. Through constant revision suggested by teachers, articulation between grades has been improved, units have become better motivated, and the individual needs of the pupils have been met.

Fundamental to all evaluations are the criteria:

- How well do the pupils read?
- How much do they read voluntarily?
- How well do they write?
- How well do they speak?
- How well do they observe?
- How well do they listen?
- How well do they think?

In-service education, revolving around these seven major divisions, has been devoted to the need for teaching reading, the developmental reading program,

reading techniques and skills, vocabulary development, reading interests, appraisals of reading abilities, articulation, interpretation of testing, the emerging curriculum, the Evaluative Criteria of the Cooperative Study of Secondary School Standards, and evaluative criteria developed by other school systems. As a part of the in-service program, representatives are sent to professional meetings. Reports are then made to the general faculty.

Records of Progress

Teachers keep records of pupils' progress on "The Language Arts Counseling Record Sheet," worked out by a teachers' committee during workshops. On this sheet the teachers record the results of their analyses of the pupils' errors as shown by oral and written activities and by pre-tests. This cumulative record provides the basis for planning individual and group drill. A diagnostic, cumulative record sheet prepared cooperatively by pupils and teacher is used for checking the pupil's progress, for comparing his proofreading with the teacher's appraisal of his paper, as a self-check on progress toward mastery for correctness and for clearness.

To aid the teacher in understanding the pupil better and in guiding his future reading, each pupil keeps in his notebook a record of his reading. Such a record enables the teacher to recommend particular books that the pupil will probably like, if he has not formed the reading habit; interesting books of other varieties, if he is confined to a single type of material; and something of a little higher quality, if he seems ready for that; how to get a book, if

he is failing to get the correct impression from what he reads. This pupil's record shows the title, the author, and the date the book was read. Pupils are not required to make formal reports. They are asked to evaluate the books as excellent, interesting, uninteresting. A reading inventory adapted from one similar to that of Witty, Brink, and Kopel is used for junior and senior high school pupils. This inventory is helpful, not only for improving reading, but also for advising pupils concerning writing or speaking problems.

Each pupil writes an autobiography, which is filed in his cumulative guidance folder along with all other records. A specimen of handwriting is on file and samplings taken through the years show the progress made. Pupils record the business and social letters they write, the motion pictures they see, the radio programs they listen to, the magazine articles they read. They keep a list of the errors they make in grammar, spelling, punctuation, pronunciation, and capitalization. Some pupils keep diaries of their school experiences.

Standardized tests showing scores for vocabulary, comprehension, grammatical usage, punctuation and capitalization, spelling, sentence structure and style, and organization are used for diagnosing for measuring achievement, for discovering the range of abilities within classes, for grouping, for adjusting the curriculum, and for comparing with scores from intelligence tests.

Proper guidance requires knowing the pupils: their likes, dislikes, attitudes, needs, interests, abilities, plans; it means meeting pupils out of school, knowing their living conditions at home, knowing the background of the family. The problems of young people provide live material for speaking and for writing. Under proper guidance from the teacher wholesome attitudes may be developed, new interests aroused, ambitions stimulated, and prejudices removed. Records which preserve this information form the basis for all evaluations of growth toward desired goals.

Evaluation Never Ending

In a school system changing during the years there resulted a continuous evaluation largely additive. From experimentation during the year, workshops retain planning, standards, and integrations. From visiting consultants, from conferences, meetings, and conventions, new ideas are woven into the program.

As teaching changes and adds material, evaluations are needed. What teachers always want is an evaluation of pupil growth. For this, teachers and pupils keep records of progress. Together they work out standards. The pupils watch their own development. Meeting pupils where they are, guiding them toward greater abilities and richer interests in reading, writing, speaking, and thinking—this is the evaluation needed to measure continuous growth.

SUMMARIES OF SESSIONS of the Chicago meeting will be available in this office. See your *News Exchange* for information concerning the charges and the ordering of these materials.

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