THOSE OF YOU who have seen pictures or museum models of the early automobiles must have noticed certain weirdly senseless things about these early vehicles—particularly the fact that they were made to resemble buggies as closely as possible, even to the extent of having dashboards and whip sockets. The horse was no longer the propelling force, but the dashboard and the whip socket were there nevertheless.

The "psychology" of this ludicrous situation is quite obvious. The principal wheeled "pleasure vehicle" with which people were familiar was the buggy. The new creation had to look as much as possible like a buggy or it wouldn't be regarded as a pleasure vehicle. The automobile designer was also a captive of the buggy stereotype. Instead of permitting function to dictate design, he clung to the prevalent "picture in the head" of what a pleasure vehicle should look like. So he put dashboards and whip sockets on his horseless carriages.

The "whip socket stereotype" made it impossible for these early designers and their public to think sensibly. It was a "must" that the new vehicle closely resemble a buggy. If it didn't look like a buggy it was unthinkable as a vehicle.

Far too many of us are today caught in a mental strait jacket closely resembling this whip socket stereotype of an earlier day. The pattern of secondary education to which we and the public have become habituated over the past century is a mosaic compounded of bodies of more or less traditional subject matter. That this conventional subject matter is little, if at all, related to the problems which youth and their elders today confront is rather generally recognized.

What is needed is a curriculum design which is dictated, not by the form of the traditional "vehicle," but by the educational functions which must be discharged if societal good health is to be had. But we are caught in a species of the whip socket stereotype. If the new curriculum design doesn't fit the mold of the conventional subjects and closely resemble what we have taught as English, science, mathematics, foreign language, social studies, and the rest, it is simply unthinkable. Much of what we see in secondary education today can be explained only in terms of the captive power of this educational equivalent of the whip socket stereotype. We see attempts to correlate or fuse the traditional subjects, presumably on something akin to the assumption that lashing two buggies together will produce an automobile. But this preserves the dashboards, whip sockets, hard rubber tires, and fringed tops, so nearly everybody is happy.

We see precisely those children who most desperately need what the school might and should offer eliminated from the secondary school because they are incapable of "mastering" the conventional subjects and hence are judged unfit for high school. That these children will variously become husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, neighbors, employers, workers, consumers, newspaper readers, radio listeners, movie goers, automobile drivers, and voters seems irrelevant. The school is little concerned about them because the accident of birth rendered them incapable of acquiring what the school regards as an education.

We see the traditional subjects offered on a relatively cost free basis. No one
would think of charging a pupil a dime to go to an algebra recitation or an English class. But the informal curriculum of parties, dances, clubs, and athletic contests—those activities productive of the learning experiences which, because of their impoverished home backgrounds, the poorer children most acutely need—is literally loaded with tuition charges.

We see conventional separate subject committees at work on curriculum development, their very organization reflecting a pre-determination to effect no basic change in the design of the school's offerings.

We see our universities and colleges training secondary school teachers almost exclusively in terms of the traditional subject matter of one or two of the conventional high school offerings. Little is included by way of the study of children and youth; far less of any study of the social foundations of education.

We see colleges of education and teachers colleges giving methods courses in the teaching of the traditional subjects, with little or no consideration to curriculum patterns realistically based on societal needs. We encounter few if any college and university admissions officers capable of recognizing anything other than the time-honored subject matter labels.

We read with mounting anticipation the exciting analysis in the Harvard Report, then note that the prescription turns out to be the conventional broad field areas of the slightly modernized secondary school.

What we must provide in the secondary school are those learning experiences (whatever they may be, and whatever they may resemble or fail to resemble) which are sensibly related to the educational needs of our time. No real life problem can be understood, much less resolved, by appeal to the subject matter of any one, two, or more of the conventional subjects or broad field subject matter areas. It follows that the needed learning experiences must be drawn from all subject fields—including some never included in the traditional secondary school curriculum.

If the American secondary school is ever to teach "whatever needs to be learned to whoever needs to learn it" some design based on this principle must prevail. It can never do so so long as most of us are rendered incapable of behaving rationally by the whip socker stereotype.

ASCD members received early in October the announcement of plans for the annual meeting being held in Cincinnati February 15-18, 1948, with headquarters at the Netherlands Plaza Hotel. It is anticipated that many individuals who are not ASCD members will also wish to attend. Registration for non-members is $1 for the entire meeting. All individuals planning to attend will be interested in the following list of topics proposed for the discussion groups: Teachers and Child Development, Better Teaching Situations, Organizing the Curriculum for Better Living and Learning, Group Processes and Discussion Techniques, Critical Problems Which Children Must Face, Organizing Individual School Staffs for Curriculum Improvement, Meeting Tensions in Human Relations, School-Community Relations, Evaluating School Programs, Grouping and Group Living, Experiences for Better Teaching, Organizing School Personnel for Administering the School Improvement Program, Using Tools for Learning, Developing International Understanding. If you plan to attend the 1948 meeting and have not indicated your choice of discussion group, will you send that choice to the ASCD office. It is hoped that registration for these discussion groups can be completed prior to the meeting dates.