

Front Lines in Education

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Maryland Evaluates. The school people in Maryland, including members of the State Department of Education and representatives of the county school systems, have set up as their major professional project for this year the development cooperatively of quantitative standards and qualitative criteria for measuring the worthwhileness and effectiveness of the educational program. This project is related to the state-wide curriculum development program which began in 1945 when the State Legislature authorized the development of a twelve-grade system uniformly throughout the state.

Following that authorization, the State Department of Education sponsored curriculum workshops in the summers of 1945, 1946, and 1947. These workshops were devoted to achieving agreement on purposes and the nature and method of the general educational program, grades one to fourteen. The program which was agreed upon is characterized as one which is based squarely on individual and group needs; is diagnostic; is a doing or practical arts program; is developed cooperatively by pupils, school people, and adults; involves facts and skills functionally; and improves evaluation throughout.

In this present phase of the development of the program, local school staffs, county groups in charge of county supervisors, and inter-county groups in charge of state supervisors will pool their thinking and evolve criteria and standards for measuring specifically the appropriateness of the program in a particular community, physical facilities (including school plant) essential to the success of the program, patterns of organization, and administrative policies in line with changes being made. The junior colleges, covering grades thirteen and fourteen, and the teacher education institutions

will form councils or associations to carry on this project in their areas.

School Radio Programs. A number of school systems and State Departments of Education have developed special radio programs for broadcast to school pupils or for use in particular phases of the educational program. Two such programs have recently come to the attention of the editor:

Massachusetts. This year the Massachusetts State Department is continuing its popular series of school broadcasts under the title, "Listen and Learn." The series is broadcast each morning Monday through Friday at 9:45 throughout the school year. The Monday morning program is a summary of the news for the previous week planned especially for grade school students. It is not a broadcast of spot news but rather an attempt to integrate the news and to tie events together. The Tuesday morning series is concerned with geography and relates the experiences of a hypothetical family as they visit Greece, Turkey, China, India, and Japan. A series on literature is presented on Wednesday morning. Thursday's broadcast dramatizes research in science. Friday morning is music appreciation. Based on a survey at the conclusion of the series in the spring of 1948, it is estimated that over 200,000 pupils listened to these programs.

Louisville. Last year the Louisville public schools broadcast a series of radio programs, "World Friendship." The series was designed to help pupils develop a better understanding of the children in other lands, and it provided vital learning experiences through the correlation of their work in social studies and music. The broadcasts were presented by pupils of

selected schools of Louisville. Mr. Robert Allen, assistant in curriculum, was in charge of the project.

Michigan Develops Personnel Policies. An excellent statement of personnel policies that should characterize school administration is to be found in a publication issued by the Michigan State Department of Public Instruction. The bulletin, *Personnel Policy Development*, was formulated by a committee of school administrators and represents the results of a series of conferences and discussions on teacher personnel practices in the state. It lists guiding principles for good personnel practices in such areas as selecting and contracting teachers, role and responsibilities of teachers, in-service education, and compensation. The bulletin also contains suggestions for the cooperative development of personnel policies in school systems.

Cooperative Curriculum Development. The Fairview public schools of Cullman, Alabama, serve as an example of how a smaller school system may cooperatively work for curriculum improvement. The Fairview School has been actively engaged in developing a core program for the past several years. A committee of teachers has developed a suggested plan for the core units for the entire twelve grades of the school. While these units are largely subject matter centered, the program is thoroughly integrated and it does provide for the introduction at appropriate places of units which deal with personal problems and concerns of the pupils.

In developing their program, the Fairview faculty has carried on an intensive in-service education and study program. Teacher committees have prepared reports on various phases of the school program for consideration of the entire faculty. The school has also fostered community participation, and a community council has been quite active in working with the faculty. Also, a student council serves as a policy formulation group and works with the faculty in bringing about school

improvement. The school also serves as a center for community recreation.

Conservation Education. Following a weekend which about sixty members of the staff of the Lansing, Michigan, public schools spent at the training school of the State Conservation Department, the faculty became so enthusiastic over conservation education that the schools have embarked on an intensive program in that area. Most of the 1947-48 school year was spent in teacher education efforts. Committees were established to develop various phases of the program. An important aspect of the program included trips to study the need for conservation in Michigan. One trip during a weekend in October covered over 700 miles. During the winter a group of teachers attended a winter session of the training school of the conservation department.

On the basis of the year's activities of the committees, work in conservation education is now being formally introduced in the school curriculum. During the present year teachers are experimenting with ways of carrying on work in conservation in connection with regular classroom activities.

Nebraska Issues Curriculum Materials. The Nebraska State Department of Public Instruction has issued several types of curriculum materials for the guidance of the teachers of the state. These publications were prepared by workshop groups, committees of teachers, or staff members of the Department as a part of the curriculum improvement program of the Division of Supervision and Curriculum.

Among the more significant of these publications is one which provides help to the elementary teacher in studying individual children and in suggesting uses which should be made of such information. The bulletin is entitled, *Gaining an Understanding of Elementary School Children*.

Two resource units have been issued as a part of the program. These are: *Facing the Fact of Atomic Energy* and *Saving Our*

Soil. Three instructional guides have been issued: *English for Nebraska High Schools*; *Language Arts for Nebraska Elementary School Children*; *Suggested Activities for the Science Program in Nebraska Elementary Schools*.

Thinking Can Be Learned

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could help to alleviate a distressing situation. The committee determined to be on the alert to evaluate the consequences of their actions.

Many opportunities can be provided for pupils to participate in carrying into action the conclusions which they reach. It is through such action and evaluation that children come to value the problem-solving method.

A Way to Critical Thinking

In the foregoing discussion the concerns of the Open-mindedness Study have been indicated as threefold:

- to provide children with opportunities to think freely
- to help them to think effectively
- to help them to clarify their values and to reach conclusions consistent with their values.

It is the belief of the teachers in the Study that one of the ways progress can be made in achieving these goals is through the problem-solving method.

Participants in the Study recognize the need for many types of experimentation in problem-solving. It is only through such an expanded program of experimentation in many schools in many places that the goal of critical thinking by the great mass of our people can be realized.

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