

The Curriculum Commentator

Harold G. Shane

Techniques of an In-Service Training Program

Each month this column, written by a member of the Association, will be concerned with curriculum development: recent trends, issues, conferences, publications, experimental studies, and learning materials. This month's contributor to "The Curriculum Commentator" is Mary Beauchamp, educational assistant in the Pasadena (Calif.) City Schools.

AN IN-SERVICE education program is dynamic and useful to teachers to the degree that it grows out of and supplements the on-going program of the school system.

Any school system which is moving ahead will have consciously identified a number of problems which it considers to be of major importance to the development of its program of education. These problems are frequently of such a nature that there is likely to be a widespread divergence of opinion about the best methods of solution.

If the problems are to be solved with the kind of understanding which results in improved practices in the classroom, the solutions must involve the participation of the teachers themselves. For this reason, any in-service education program should be developed on the principle of widespread participation and should be so organized that time is given to the consistent study of those problems which are real to the teachers.

If we operate on these principles—widespread participation, real problems, and provided time—notable progress in the solution of problems and improvement of teacher morale should and does result. The principles stated above cannot be implemented unless study or discussion groups are organized, during which time teachers have an opportunity to isolate the various aspects of the problems, to collect data about the different ways of treating the problems, and to draw conclusions and recommendations.

It is of key importance that any recommendations which are evolved should receive the serious consideration of the administrative officials whose responsibility it is to implement such recommendations. If they cannot be enacted, the teachers should be thoroughly informed as to *why*, and every recommendation which can be placed into action should be enacted as soon after it is made as possible. In other words, an in-service program has little point unless it moves out of the realm of theory and generalization and into the realm of specific practices and actions. Thus the administration should not endorse an in-service program unless it is likewise ready to act upon the cooperative thinking which results from it.

Pasadena City Schools are involved in such a process at present. A major part of the in-service program for the 1949-50 school year consists of ten discussion or study groups which were identified by the thinking done by the entire teaching staff during the previous year. A statement to the teachers indicating the opportunity for study in these ten areas reads as follows:

"If satisfactory agreements are to be evolved, teachers, administrators, supervisors—indeed all of us—will want a part in the planning, discussion, and decisions which are made. It is expected that study in most areas will lead to *action recommendations*. Such recommendations will be fed directly to committees working in these areas or directly to the administration. . . .

We have attempted to suggest some of the major problems connected with each area. You will note these suggestions are keyed to positive approaches that need to be studied in order to improve education in Pasadena. They are not intended to limit the possibilities of the group, since we believe each discussion group should determine the scope of its study."

The enthusiasm with which this study program, designed to lead to action, has been accepted by the teachers is indicated by the fact that some three hundred of the thousand Pasadena teachers have voluntarily signed up to study in one of the areas.

Be Sure to Read . . .

TOOLS FOR LEARNING. *Better Learning Through Current Materials*, edited by Lucien Kinney, professor of education, and Katharine Dresden, lecturer in education, Stanford University Press. The book is a result of a three-year project suggested by the California State Department of Education to study use of current materials in the classroom. It is a more detailed study of the same project described in *Better Teaching Through the Use of Current Materials*, published about eighteen months ago. Those familiar with the project will remember Time, Inc. cooperated with the project by contributing supplies of periodicals, films, and recordings.

The project was launched by a workshop held on the Berkeley campus and has continued to use the workshop and conference techniques to further the development of the project. From the project has resulted the formation of an organization known as California Council on Improvement of Instruction, which operates informally and dynamically. The book was largely the work of this Council. This is an unusually attractive book in format, style, and print. The pictures are excellent. The style is conducive to further reading. Especially helpful are the actual descriptions of ways in which specific current

materials have been used in classrooms. The latter part of the book deals with the relationship of teaching techniques and environment to use of current materials. This is an extremely challenging concept.

AN ADDRESS. *Selecting Tomorrow's Experience—Liberal or Authoritarian?* is the J. Richard Street Lecture for 1949 delivered by Clarence W. Hunnicutt, Director of Elementary Education and Reading Clinic, Syracuse University. It is thought-provoking and challenging because it so concisely and forcefully states the issue of pressures which are being placed upon public education today. To quote: "We are not permitted to see certain motion pictures or to read certain periodicals or books. . . . The mentality which says that it alone knows what is right and wise for people is the dictator mentality. It is to be feared and fought against bitterly." Read this address.

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR AMERICAN SOCIETY, edited by John Guy Fowlkes, The University of Wisconsin Press, 811 State Street, Madison. A hundred years ago in a pioneer settlement, The University of Wisconsin was started by individuals who recognized the need for education in a democracy. The centennial anniversary, which was commemorated during 1948-49, was opened by a National Educational Conference on the subject of "Higher Education for American Society." The book by this title is a compilation of addresses made by the delegates and representatives attending the conference. The book runs the gamut of problems confronting higher education in America; and it sets forth the prevailing ideas concerning ways of solving problems. The book includes addresses from thirty-eight individuals representing colleges and universities from coast to coast.

FROM A DETROIT SCHOOL. *Living Democracy at the Barbour Intermediate School*, by Dora E. Bowlby, Bernice M.

Schreder, and Ifie Wyatt, tells how democracy is practiced at Barbour Intermediate School, which is one of the two intermediate schools participating in the Detroit Citizenship Education Study. Since the experiment has begun, English and Social Studies have been combined as General Education; the homeroom period has been lengthened; more teacher-pupil planning has evolved; and the first Parent-Teacher Association organized in any Detroit intermediate school was started. Take fifteen or twenty minutes to read this pamphlet "done up" in attractive, easy-to-read form.

TEACHER APPRAISAL. *The Evaluation of Teaching Backgrounds and Concepts*, by Dwight E. Beecher, gives a thorough and complete history of evaluative techniques and instruments as applied to teaching and as they relate to (1) studies in the appraisal of teaching efficiency; (2) different approaches to the problem of teacher appraisal; and (3) research on the behavior of teachers which pupils like and dislike. Maurice Troyer, Director, Psychological Services Center, Syracuse University, states the justification for the book: ". . . when the parent and taxpayer find money to meet salary increases of fifty percent or more, it is natural for them to be concerned lest they find themselves . . . paying three, four, or five thousand dollars per year to a teacher who is teaching their children to dislike school and to dislike learning."

The author believes the "public demand for evidence of improvement in teaching efficiency has increased." One of the challenging studies cited is the South Carolina report, "Investigation of Educational Qualifications of Teachers in South Carolina." This study sought the reactions of over three thousand pupils, and the report proved that pupils react similarly to the same teacher. This makes valid the present trend of giving more attention to pupil-teacher relationships in connection with teacher appraisal.

Another trend, encouraging to note, is the cooperative evaluation wherein the teacher values from a self-evaluation and

from the process of talking over her growth with her administrator or supervisor. It was interesting to this reviewer that no mention was made of the process being reversed—that is, the teacher appraising the administrator and supervisor. Utopia has not yet been reached.

Chapters V and VI utilize the teacher behaviors agreed upon by thirty thousand boys and girls as those behaviors upon which to develop an evaluative instrument. These are fairness, sympathetic understanding, cheerfulness, enthusiasm, respect for the individual pupil, ability to hold interest, thorough knowledge, and adequate control. Mr. Beecher seeks an intelligent appraisal of teachers while recognizing the hazards and difficulties involved in the process.

YOUR PART IN YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION by Bess B. Lane. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1948. The author has attempted (1) to state in a simple, logical fashion the need for parents to be sufficiently concerned about their children to become organized into some kind of parents group and (2) to show how such an organization may function. The scope is somewhat limited and it seems to be more of a summation of present practices than a suggestion for untried techniques in the area of home-school relations. Many practical steps are suggested and developed for parents becoming evolved in a cooperative approach to education. Groups that are just becoming organized will find the book helpful.

SPOTLIGHT ON STARTING TO SCHOOL

Your Child Starts to School in Louisville, Louisville (Ky.) Public Schools. This is Louisville's attempt to orient parents to the nature of the child's beginning school. The handbook covers the primary grades. Considerable emphasis is given to reading readiness and reading skills.

Your Child in Kindergarten, Pasadena (Calif.) City Schools, tells in a straightforward manner the kind of life children

will be living in kindergarten. It seeks to invite a cooperative approach to child growth and development by the home and school working together.

CURRICULUM BULLETINS

Applied Chemistry for High School Students, Board of Education of the City of New York, 1948-49 Series, No. 2, New York, N. Y.

The Slow Learner in the Secondary School, Office of the County Superintendent of Schools, Division of Secondary Education, Los Angeles County, California, September, 1949.

Home and Family Living, Pasadena City Schools, Secondary Curriculum

Publication No. 19, 1949-1950, Pasadena, California.

How to Make a Play School Work, A Manual for Teachers and Group Leaders, Play Schools Association, Inc., 119 West 57 Street, New York 19, N. Y.

PAMPHLETS

Shall Children, Too, Be Free? by Howard A. Lane; Freedom Pamphlet; Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Being a Good Parent, by James L. Hymes, Jr., Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Discipline, by James L. Hymes, Jr., Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Curriculum Research

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technical details or matters. In all instances, however, the group of teachers and supervisors participated in the selection or construction of tests, questionnaires, or interview schedules for collecting data. In the analysis of supervisory practice the committee of supervisors participating in the study did the major part of the work in constructing the questionnaires and interview schedules used. In the study of the core curriculum, the committee participated in selecting published tests as well as in developing sociometric techniques and questionnaires. In the study of the curriculum for slow-learning pupils, the teachers, supervisors, and research technician are now constructing a problem check list and group interview method to discover the major problems and concerns of pupils as a basis for a vital curriculum.

The fourth step involves group participation in the collection of data. In all of these action-research studies the group members administered the tests, questionnaires, problem check lists, sociometric techniques, and interview schedules. They cooperated in selecting samples of pupils and in equating experimental with control groups.

The fifth step involves the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered. At this point the group helped to determine and to execute the methods by which the data could be most efficiently analyzed, summarized, and reported. Once the data were summarized, the entire group helped to make the interpretation of the findings and to formulate the conclusions.

The sixth step involves group cooperation in applying the findings in particular situations. Since each member of each group had been involved in all stages of the development of the research project, and since each had a clear understanding of what the data indicated as desirable next steps, each was willing to apply the findings personally and to spread the facts and findings to associates. The effect of action-research is to mitigate the attitude of hostility frequently observed toward the findings and recommendations of the independent type of research. Action-research studies increase identification with, and friendly acceptance of findings and recommendations. They help to close the gap between research and practice.—J. Wayne Wrightstone, Director of Educational Research, Board of Education of the City of New York.

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