

worker for curriculum improvement. In this capacity he must:

- Take steps to be as certain as possible that teachers wish to work on an instructional improvement program.
- Provide opportunity for staff members who wish to work on the program to become acquainted with him before the time when they must make the decision on consultant personnel.
- If possible be present at the discussions in which teachers identify the area or areas for study so he will understand their interests and concerns in those areas. If this is not possible, he should purposely create an occasion when he will have opportunity to gain the necessary background.
- Be aware of the readiness of the group for the cooperative study and development of the particular area to be considered.
- Move gradually with the group from their level of expectation to a more sophisticated level of planning and study.
- See the implications of what is being done in any one area for the entire school program.
- Provide teachers with opportunities to explore frontier thinking and practice.
- Be aware of and work with the school administration on areas usually thought of as administrative which affect teachers in their work for curriculum improvement.

Effective Teachers Follow Through

TOM GARDNER

The effective teacher's classroom methods must be consistent with his stated philosophy. Tom Gardner, teacher in East High School, Denver, Colorado, discusses the necessity for such 'follow through' if ideas are to find expression in action.

"THE TEACHER, in the final analysis, determines the content of any course he is conducting. If he sees that students are in danger of choosing a topic which he feels is not suitable, he must steer the thinking of the group toward choice of a more suitable topic."

The speaker was a participant in a workshop on problems of general education held during the summer of 1949. The leader of the workshop did not reveal his own thinking on the topic raised by the speaker. Many of the other participants, however, found difficulty in restraining themselves from open

and arbitrary opposition to the point of view being expressed.

This article is not intended as a polemic on the advantages or disadvantages to be derived from pupil participation in planning. It is, however, a plea for honesty on the part of the teacher who may have decided to experiment with the idea of "allowing" the boys and girls of his junior or senior high school class, or the young men and young women of his college class, to have a voice in the determination of the content of the course of study which they will follow for the ensuing days

and weeks. This article does not advocate a completely child-centered activity program, in which the status of the instructor is that of an interested, but non-functioning, bystander. Rather, it is a statement of a point of view that boys and girls, young men and young women do have many problems in common, problems which vary in intensity from one part of the country to another, from one section of the same city to another, from one year to the next.

Teacher Must Be Honest

No quarrel is intended with that instructor who sincerely believes that the content of *any* course, whether formal mathematics or a general education course based upon needs, can be most effectively determined by him. Certainly, during the past several years scholars have conducted invaluable research into the needs of youth, and we, as classroom teachers, would be ill-advised indeed to overlook the literature on the needs of youth as we go about our preliminary planning. However, once the die has been cast in favor of enlisting the best thinking of the class in the determination of course content, the teacher must be absolutely honest with himself and with the students. He must avoid even the idea of stacking the cards in favor of or against any particular area or topic in which the class evinces genuine interest. For no matter how subtle or ingenious he may be, the teacher cannot long deceive his students. They know when they are being directed; they recognize coercion. Anything other than honesty will promote disaster to any real rapport between students and teacher. Once a class recognizes that a teacher has been dishonest

with its members, rapport from that time becomes impossible. The teacher is sometimes unable under any conditions to regain the confidence of this particular group of young people.

In a much more favorable position, so far as rapport is concerned, is the teacher who says at the very beginning of the course, "From my reading and from my study, which have taken my time and money for the past several years, I am certain that I know just what I can most effectively teach in this course. Therefore, we will follow a particular course of study for this period of time, and we will not vary from it." The members of the class might not like the choice of subject matter which the teacher proposes to present, but they will probably respect his honesty. They may complain that some of the material is not significant, or is not well presented, but they cannot in this instance charge the teacher with saying one thing and doing another.

A GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE EVOLVED

For some years, the writer has been privileged to work with boys and girls in a course which in the past has been called, "General Education." A portion of the course, which in its entirety consists of one period a day during the sophomore year, has been taken up with units of work which have been, in effect, established by mandate. Each "general education" teacher has been requested to present units of study in orientation to the new school and to the new environment, in program planning, in the motor car and safety, in college preparatory guidance, and in certain other areas.

These more or less fixed units of study have taken their places in the curriculum because they have been demonstrated as having value to the entering sophomore students. There has been a considerable block of time left, however, after the class completes its studies and activities in the areas of the *set* units. Teachers have been encouraged to work out a series of units which they and their students believe will prove of value to them. It may be of interest to note that no pressure of any kind has been placed on teachers to utilize the method of pupil-teacher planning of these units, but much help has been made available in case a teacher has elected to operate in this manner.

Planning for Use of Free Time

The writer has approached the utilization of the free time in somewhat the following manner. He has told the class, "We have at our disposal one hour a day for the next six weeks to use as we see fit. As you know, this period has been given to us to use for the solving of problems which are common to all of us. It is not a period in which we should be doing algebra or Spanish. We can use this period to try to find answers to problems which are of concern to all of us. But before we even try to get down on the board all of the different problems upon which we might wish to work, we must set up criteria, or standards, so that we will be able to make wise choices of problems."

It is at this point that the reader may say, "This is the point at which he starts to influence the thinking of the students." While it is possible that the teacher may have to suggest certain cri-

teria which the class has overlooked, it has been the experience of this teacher that the boys and girls of the average sophomore class have set criteria for selection of units of study which are highly practical and functional. However, there seems to be nothing inherently wrong in the teacher's openly setting up the criteria himself. After all, there are limitations of space and time; there are limitations imposed by the social milieu; there are limitations of library resources; there are limitations of available resource persons.

Boys and girls realize the practical necessity of setting up standards for choice. They have no trouble in articulating such criteria as, "There wouldn't be any use in choosing a topic which we couldn't complete in six weeks," or "We would have to be able to find someone to help us." This teacher has found that he has had to help the class refine to a more definitive stage some rather vague criteria; he has seen a group of sophomore boys and girls set up all the criteria which were necessary as a basis for selection of topics.

Class and Teacher Undertake a Problem Census

After criteria for selection of possible topics have been agreed upon, the class and the teacher proceed to the *problem census*. This amounts to a listing of all the possible problem or interest areas which the boys and girls indicate as those of concern to them.

Here, again, the teacher is not an outsider. He is a member of the group, and he has as much right as any member of the class to suggest topics for consideration—topics which the group for one reason or another has over-

looked. The writer reiterates his belief that the teacher may be a true member of the group—not a dictator of its selections. If the group has devoted careful thought and sufficient time to the statement of criteria, there will be no need for the teacher to dictate, either overtly or covertly, the selection of the topic for study.

During the process of the problem census, application of the criteria to the selection of topics will likely not be carried on, although it is probable that certain types of questionable or extreme ideas will not be mentioned simply because they so obviously violate these criteria. However, the teacher will encourage the boys and girls to state as clearly as possible topics for consideration. He might even use, with good results, a question box, in which boys and girls would be able to deposit statements of problems which they might hesitate to state openly.

Criteria Influence Selection

After every pupil has had an opportunity to contribute to the problem census, and after the census has been completed to the satisfaction of the group, the time has come to apply the criteria for selection. The teacher must be exceedingly careful at this stage of the process to avoid the slightest appearance of summarily dismissing *any* of the topics which have been suggested. Some one of the students has thought his problem worthy of the group's consideration, and he is likely to be hurt by its light dismissal on the part of the teacher. All the teacher can do in this matter is to insist that the members of the group apply each of the criteria to each of the problems listed. In this way

there is usually quick elimination of some topics, or combination of several minor topics into a broader, more general problem area. There should always be general consensus before a topic is deleted from the list.

As soon as those topics which do not seem to measure up to the criteria have been eliminated, the most interesting and, to the writer, educationally valuable part of the planning process usually takes place. It is in the selection of the topic, or topics, for study that the democratic process is seen to operate. It is fascinating to witness a group of thirty boys and girls arriving at an agreement through a sometimes long and arduous procedure of compromise and consensus.

Several Areas Might Be Chosen

Certain difficulties may be encountered as a result of pupil-teacher selection of units of study. When the writer first attempted the process, an impasse developed in which a class was evenly divided between two possible choices. The only solution that the class could reach was that both topics should be pursued concurrently, and the teacher spent a very busy six weeks trying to act as advisor while the two groups went their separate ways on totally different units of work. Following this experience, the teacher usually stated as one of the tentative criteria of selection that the topic selected must be one which the entire class might profitably pursue. There would seem to be, however, no valid reason why a *number* of interest fields might not be explored concurrently by group members. Needless to say, such a situation requires a skilful, confident and resourceful advisor.

The process of choosing and building a unit of study is not original with the writer. A former director of instruction of the Denver public schools once worked with many groups of teachers in the methodology of pupil-teacher planning. He also experienced considerable success in the more complicated area of pupil-teacher-parent planning of units of work.

Getting Into the Study

This paper is not intended to delve into the methods of getting into the study which has been chosen. It would seem valuable, if success has been attained in the original selection of topics through pupil participation, to continue to utilize such participation in planning the approach to the unit chosen for study.

Pupil-teacher planning is not a simple matter, nor is it a method which can be learned from textbooks or periodicals. To become proficient in the process, the teacher must have some background in it, must believe in it and practice it. Most important, however, is the necessity for the teacher to follow through.

If the pupils decide that problems of dating are important to them and fulfil the criteria for selection, if they decide that they would benefit by a study of slum conditions in their town, if they decide that they do not know what makes adults "tick" and would like to know more about that most elusive of problems—relations between adults and teen-agers—then the teacher must, to the limit of his ability, act as advisor and resource person to the group.

Curriculum Guides Reflect Current Practice

GUY WAGNER

Guy Wagner, Director of the Curriculum Laboratory, Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls, presents an annotated bibliography of curriculum publications which reflect current educational practices.

THE following publications should prove helpful in suggesting ways of organizing for cooperative curriculum development. In most instances the bulletins are of a general nature, pointing out methods used to initiate, carry forward and evaluate curriculum programs. Frequently these general curriculum patterns are precursors of guides in more specific curriculum areas.

The reader will recognize that the

publications selected are representative of forward-looking and sound curriculum practices but not necessarily *the best* in the country. Obviously it has been impossible to survey all the curriculum materials produced throughout the nation. In most instances, however, the writer's judgment has been corroborated by one or more of some twenty-five curriculum specialists who responded to an earlier letter requesting

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