

Our Curriculum Center Has Many Uses

THYRA JENNINGS

A curriculum laboratory can serve several purposes, as evidenced in this article by Thyra Jennings, Kalamazoo Public Schools, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

WHEN members of a faculty are to participate in development of an educational program they need a place where they can plan, study and work together. In the Kalamazoo public schools, a Curriculum Center has been established to meet such a need.

The purposes served by such a center are manifold. It provides a central location for the collection of useful instructional materials as well as for professional literature and supplies for the teachers. It furnishes examples and illustrations of available materials, and provides a common source through which teachers may become acquainted with these materials. It aids in the work of determining suitable grade placement of materials and in that of adapting materials for either individual or group use of accelerated or retarded pupils. It also provides a convenient place in which to discuss problems or to create new curricular materials.

Materials in our center are housed in the Curriculum Laboratory and in the adjoining Audio-Visual Laboratory. Central location in our city makes these materials easily accessible to our teachers. Convenience is of great importance in determining the extent of voluntary use that will be made of such a center.

In our curriculum laboratory, examination copies of textbooks, reference books, dictionaries and other supple-

mentary volumes for school and classroom use are kept. We also have a large collection of pamphlets and bulletins. Many of these are free materials which have been sent to us upon our request from a wide variety of sources. Though many of these materials are commercial in nature, issued as advertising by industries, chambers of commerce or other organizations, they often prove to have real value in educational use and to have strong appeal to the interest of students.

The latest professional books, publications and periodicals are to be found in our curriculum center. Also we have a fairly extensive collection of courses of study from public school systems of various sizes and types throughout the United States. Publications of the United Nations and educational organizations, weekly news magazines for classroom use and educational advertising from map and book companies are included in our files. All these materials have been carefully catalogued so that they may be circulated throughout the school system and community.

Maps and Films Exhibited

The audio-visual laboratory at present is displaying a variety of maps and globes adapted for use at different grade levels. This exhibit enables teachers to compare the advantages of vari-

ous types of mountings for each classroom situation.

We are building up a selective collection of the films and film-strips most frequently requested for classroom use by our teachers. We are adding to this collection as rapidly as funds become available.

Equipment for showing these films and film-strips is now available for loan through the laboratory, provided a particular school does not have equipment that is adequate for its immediate needs.

The available collection of phonograph records includes recitals of stories, poems and historical documents especially for use at appropriate grade levels in English, social studies or literature classes. These recordings are found to be especially useful in unified courses. The collection also contains recordings of vocal and instrumental music, both classical and dance, and folk songs illustrative of the cultures of nations and peoples of the world. In addition, equipment for cutting records and for making tape recordings is available for general use.

The collection of pictures for loan to the teachers includes likenesses of people important in history, literature, government, politics and current affairs. Pictures on historical subjects and geographical locations are provided in sets which are suitable for bulletin board use. Charts and graphs designed for use as guidance helps or aids in teaching democratic processes are found here also.

The educational travel committee of our schools is currently compiling a file of places where visits by our school groups are welcome as well as likely to

be beneficial. This file will be kept in our audio-visual laboratory.

The fact that we have such a usable and useful curriculum center does not prevent wide use by our teachers of materials from other sources. When desirable materials are discovered elsewhere, our faculty members are urged to secure samples for our curriculum center or to report their findings to our curriculum director, so that copies may be secured for study, analysis and possible adaptation to the local situation.

Center Started as Library

Our curriculum center started as a small library. It was soon found, however, to be so helpful to the teachers that its use grew even more rapidly than had been anticipated. Having an alert curriculum director became a great advantage to our system at this point. He foresaw the possibilities and values of a center that could be used by all teachers. He lost no time in seeing to it that this center was carefully and thoroughly developed and that suitable housing was found for it.

A great deal of planning, effort and hard work have gone into the building of the curriculum center. We now have two full-time secretaries and librarians in the center. The curriculum director, with two assistants, has charge of the center.

Physical equipment of the center includes tables, chairs, chalkboards, bulletin boards, pencils, paper, typewriters and mimeograph machines. Book shelves, display racks and files line the walls. Many individual teachers as well as teacher committees make extensive use of the center. The movable tables and chairs are adaptable to a variety

of group arrangements. Groups planning curriculum work have found great value in discussing and examining at the same time many of the materials dealing with their field of special interest.

Conferences for determining policies, planning new materials, making decisions or discussing plans on a departmental level often are scheduled in the curriculum center. Building faculties are invited to hold meetings here so that all teachers may become acquainted with materials and equipment which are available for their use. Individual teachers, too, are welcome here to explore, to examine resources and to study. Materials in the center are available for loan to them. Some of the materials, however, must be requested early if the teacher is to secure them at the time when they are most needed. This is especially true of audio-visual equipment. Teachers are encouraged to bring student groups to the center to examine a variety of possibilities before selections are made of materials for classroom use.

Besides its other equipment, the audio-visual laboratory is furnished with dark shades so that films and filmstrips may be previewed and evaluated. This is for the benefit of the teachers and pupil-teacher committees as well as for the curriculum director and other administrators.

A Department Develops Materials

When the social studies department members decided that their course of study needed to be examined and reorganized, members of the production committee agreed that they could work most effectively at the curriculum lab-

oratory. Our board of education made it possible for much of this work to be accomplished during the summer when there would be few interruptions. This experiment proved to be very satisfying to the teachers involved. Members of the committee carried out all the necessary research with materials found in the center. After we had analyzed our needs and were ready to write the resource guide for the social studies, we continued to meet and work in the laboratory. Here all pertinent materials, including courses of study and other professional books, were easily available. Invitations were sometimes extended to various members of our department throughout the school system to advise with us on the work being done and on the materials being used.

When we were ready to examine textbooks, we invited book company representatives to our committee meetings. They met with us during a two-day conference period and brought to our attention the latest materials available in the social studies field. These materials are now available for ready reference in our curriculum laboratory. We are using a much greater variety of materials in our classrooms now as a result of this group experience.

Small representative committees or larger groups made up of whole departments often meet with consultants in the curriculum center. Special study groups and workshops dealing with particular educational problems have come to prefer this as a meeting place. In-service training programs for smaller groups are held here, as well as conferences of teachers and educational leaders or administrators dealing with

problems involving guidance or classroom instruction. These groups include the P.T.A., City Council, and the Audio-Visual, Junior High School Mathematics, Dictionary, Professional Growth, Handwriting and Junior High Curriculum Committees.

Because of the increased demand for use of our curriculum center, meetings in it must now be scheduled weeks in advance. The secretarial staff has the responsibility for scheduling these meet-

ings. Teachers from many local schools and students from the local colleges find the curriculum center very helpful. Every day and at almost any time during the day teachers and students may be found in the curriculum laboratory and the audio-visual laboratory. They may be searching for information, reading for relaxation and entertainment, or hoping to find reassurance or assistance on some problem. But always our curriculum center is a busy place.

Glenn E. Smith

Chief, Guidance Services Division, State Department of Public Instruction, Lansing, Michigan; President of the National Association of Guidance Supervisors for two years.

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF THE GUIDANCE PROGRAM

This book is designed to provide teachers and beginning counselors with the fundamental skills needed for functioning as guidance workers. It traces the growth of guidance services briefly and then describes the activities and services of the guidance program. In addition to helping in the development of basic skills in the field of guidance, the book provides a foundation for further training in the field. Coming in June.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, 60 FIFTH AVE., N. Y. 11

Copyright © 1951 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.