

Our college students in the "Secondary Principles" course considered the visit by Sunville's Town Manager and Mr. Morse one of the high spots of their semester's work. There is much that is contagious about the kind of learning that goes on in Sunville.

One should note in this description of the situation at Ashland, that here is a process of curriculum change coming about mainly through the initiative of a single teacher. This program is meeting with success because of the willing cooperation of students, other staff members, and people in the com-

munity. It represents a program which clearly demonstrates how ample opportunity for interchange of values and concepts held by various age groups in the community is possible. In this learning experience, not only have the young people been working with students of various other grade levels, but with adults representing various age levels of the community as well. It is this kind of work in education which is developing a program in our schools which will meet more effectively the imperative needs of our youth. Let's have more of such educational planning.

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## *What Are the Issues In Secondary Education?*

THEODORE D. RICE

Reporting for the ASCD Committee on Improvement of the Secondary School Curriculum, this author comments on current issues in secondary education. He also outlines the committee's plans for further action.

AT THE 1953 ASCD meeting in Cleveland, about one hundred and fifteen people from all parts of the country gathered in an open meeting of the Committee on Improvement of the Secondary School Curriculum. Two thirds of these persons were from secondary schools. The remainder were from community groups, colleges, state departments and the U. S. Office of Education. They were asked to advise the committee regarding what they thought such a group could do, through the ASCD, to help improve the curriculum. During the hour of the

meeting they identified the following as areas of need and also suggested some possible procedures for meeting these needs. These are not listed in order of frequency of mention, but rather in order of relatedness. They give, in part, some clues as to issues in secondary education.

- *Impact of the child-centered emphasis on the secondary curriculum:*

How can we deal more effectively with the wide range of differences between pupils in present secondary schools? What should we do about pupils whose needs are not met by the

present program? How can we let our practice better reflect what we know about adolescent growth and development? Can we have a child-centered emphasis rather than an emphasis on subject matter?

- *Interaction between the school and the community:*

What is the role of the high school in the community? How can we better integrate youth into life of the community? How can the school and community cooperate more effectively in making changes? How can school and youth-serving agencies be more closely related so as to achieve a youth education program in the community?

- *Problem of broadening and improving the curriculum:*

How can the high school contribute to more complete and all-round development? How can we achieve better coordination between the various areas of the present curriculum? How can we minimize the repetitious nature of current curriculum experiences and improve on their organization and selection? Would a broader curriculum result if teachers, in their writings, were to report more extensively on existing classroom practices?

How can we make more effective progress in core curriculum development, in life adjustment education, and in preparation of teachers for such work? How can a better bridge be effected from the elementary to the secondary school? Should the curriculum be envisioned as a kindergarten-through-grade-twelve program? What is the place of the junior high school? How can we achieve greater flexibility in our scheduling techniques and in our curriculum planning? Other more specific

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suggestions were also made, for example: "How can we improve vocational education, physical fitness?" and "Why not make direct progress on economic education?"

- *Role of colleges in relation to the secondary school curriculum:*

How can further progress be made with regard to modification in college entrance requirements? Could this be achieved through working with colleges on the effects of their requirements on the secondary school curriculum? What steps can we take further to clarify what the high school diploma actually stands for?

- *Evaluation as a means of taking stock and making changes:*

How can we determine when needs of youth are being effectively met? Can we make better progress in knowing what changes in attitudes are desirable and how such changes may be made? Can we encourage all secondary teachers to evaluate their programs and identify what is essential and what is not? What can we learn about our program through holding power studies? What can we learn about our program through studies of the "products" of secondary schools, especially with reference to vocational competence, citizenship and scholarship?

- *Program improvement through sharing practices and ideas:*

How can we start improving curriculum? How can teachers be helped in recognizing a need for curriculum revision? Can some means be devised

for schools in regions and local areas, for example, to share their practices, ideas and problems? Can schools learn from each other how methods and curriculum are keeping pace with all pupils?

- *Pre-service teacher education as a route to program improvement:*

Might some studies be initiated to determine the basic social skills that contribute to successful teaching and use of best learning procedures?

- *Use of research findings to bring about curriculum change:*

How can research be more effectively pointed up and translated into action? Would not a bulletin on research at the secondary level be useful? Could we not find value in studying school situations in which research is actually being carried on to see what difference it makes?

It should not be concluded that these represent all the most important concerns regarding secondary education felt by those attending the meeting. For example, the listing omits reference to materials—an area many teachers would place high on a list of important issues in secondary education, since so much of existing materials apparently leads to conformity to present programs.

Likewise, there is omission of such areas of concern as consumer and conservation education, family life education, education for moral and spiritual values and for recreation. Also the pressures of our times would seem to have led to reference to the teaching of controversial issues and the development of critical thinking. Competencies in these areas on the part of our youth could almost certainly be of major importance in years to come.

## Plan for Committee Action

In the main, however, the specific suggestions and the omissions are in known areas of concern. The issues appear to be in effecting what we know, in establishing new practice or in modifying practice amid conventional or traditional procedures. The issues as revealed by the ASCD group meeting in Cleveland are those of initiating and bringing about change, of the improving of human relationships in schools and communities while change is under way. The consideration has led the Committee on Improvement of the Secondary School Curriculum to proceed with planning as follows:

- (1) To affirm the position that the individual school or the local school system *can* solve its problems, can get started on program improvement, can establish ways of working together and of using community and other resources.

- (2) To recommend to the Executive Committee of ASCD that the Committee on Improvement of the Secondary School Curriculum be constituted as a clearinghouse for such schools as may wish to use its auspices for the exchange of information regarding specific steps in program improvement being taken by other schools.

- (3) To publicize through this article and by other means a report of questions and suggestions raised at the Cleveland meeting, and to inquire whether the list includes the specific problems of those who are interested in participating in this approach to program improvement.

- (4) To request that interested persons spend six months or more on the

problem of program improvement of most concern to them. (We realize that some schools may spend many more months than this.) If a number of schools do this, they would provide, for elaboration by the committee, some data on ways of making change and on the changes that result therefrom. These data can then be shared by the participating schools and others concerned with similar problems. The committee would welcome analyses which include descriptions covering the following items:

(a) What is the major problem in your school?

(b) Describe the problem in as much detail as is necessary to make clear its unique aspects.

(c) How was the problem discovered or encountered? What symptoms led to its discovery?

(d) Can probable causes of the problem be ascertained?

(e) What are the effects of the problem?

(f) What attempts are being made to solve it?

(g) What blocks impede its solution?

(h) What related issues or problems have arisen?

(5) To recommend to the Publications Committee that publications be planned pertaining to persistent problems or to promising developments suggested in reports of participating schools and groups.

(6) To refer to the Committee on Preparation of Core Teachers such problems and data as are most pertinent to their work.

(7) To maintain contact with the U. S. Office of Education and the National Association of Secondary-School

Principals regarding the efforts of this group.

It would be shortsighted to stop with an assumption that reports and written exchange of experience alone will provide adequate communication. The committee suggests that regional or local area groups get together to talk through their problem analyses, their clues for action, the blocks encountered and the ways of working developed. It is quite likely that such interaction, already well established in many situations, will bring about greater mutual support than could be provided through written means.

Such efforts are most encouraging. Reassuring, too, are the existence of the many effective services and organizations available as resources to schools. Total enrollment in secondary education is expected to be increased by one or two million in the next decade. Such an increase will make almost unbearable the already tangible pressures for increased teaching personnel, for more and better rooms, for improved administrative organization and finance. It is imperative, nevertheless, that we make progress in program improvement in spite of these present and impending pressures. Not only must we make further headway in improving procedures of bringing about change, but we must also seek out evidence of further changes needed. Our exploration in secondary education must show our concern for effecting such needed gains as those indicated in the questions and suggestions made during the time of the Cleveland meeting. It must also reveal on our part a search for ways and means of identifying new issues and encouraging further change.

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