

# Curriculum Research

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*The activities described below illustrate varied research programs under way in different school systems. In Santa Barbara County, California, careful research is now helping teachers extend their understanding of students and their "native intelligence." Here they are exploring ways of using in their schools the findings of other research projects. Such a plan offers almost limitless opportunities for local cooperative study.*

*"Building the Curriculum" summarizes the role of research in curriculum development in the New York City Schools.*

ROBERT S. FLEMING

## A Measure of "Native Intelligence"?

IT WOULD be difficult, if not impossible, to find supporters for the contention that group intelligence tests today are valid measures of "native" intelligence. Available evidence suggests that IQ's may be influenced adversely by impoverished cultural backgrounds, reading disabilities, language handicaps, and the like. Yet group intelligence tests are used in virtually all school systems because of their marked usefulness in predicting future achievement, classifying pupils, interpreting progress, setting limits to vocational choice, and counselling parents about realistic goals for their children.

A test of native intelligence is, of course, needed. For example, when Mike—who has illiterate parents and who enters school from a crowded slum where only broken English is spoken—shows an IQ of 107, his teacher of necessity asks: Is Mike really a very bright boy to have achieved this group test score with so many handicaps? With extra help and encouragement, could he be expected to work with the top group in the class, or is it satisfactory if his work—like his IQ—remains average for his grade? Is there a test which more accurately measures

Mike's true intelligence than the one he just took?

Yes, say the authors of a recently published test, the Davis-Eells Test. Davis and Eells, disturbed by the cultural bias of traditional group intelligence tests, devised a measure of general intelligence or "problem-solving ability" which purports to minimize many of the more obviously culture-bound aspects of earlier tests. Their new test, in booklet form, requires no reading, is untimed (all children progress at the same rate while the teacher reads instructions aloud), uses an easy vocabulary, and consists of a series of pictures which are appealing to children. The test is, in fact, labelled for children as the Davis-Eells Games.

The possibilities of an intelligence test reasonably fair to all school-children are extensive. At present, however, not enough is known of the validity of the Games to justify, except experimentally, their substitution for existing IQ tests. The authors themselves are cautious about drawing direct parallels with current concepts of IQ. They are also uncertain of the test's validity for rural or bilingual children.

In Santa Barbara County, California,

a research project is currently under way in which some relationships between the Davis-Eells Games and other measures of intelligence and achievement are being investigated. This project affects a diversified group including many bilingual and rural children. The fourth grade enrollment (c. 220) of four cooperating schools took the following battery of tests: the California Test of Mental Maturity (CTMM), the California Tests of Reading and Arithmetic, the Good-enough Draw-a-Man Test, and the Davis-Eells Games.

Several outcomes from the (as yet uncomputed) interrelationships of these tests have been hypothesized. If the test corresponds to what we now consider to be intelligence, it should correlate significantly with all the other tests; but if it is in fact less culturally weighted, it should correspond more closely to the non-language section of the CTMM, the arithmetic fundamentals test, and the Draw-a-Man Test than to the language section of the CTMM, the reading test, and arithmetic reasoning. Children from lower socio-economic levels and bilingual children are expected to do better on

the Games than on traditional tests. If the new test is materially different from our other group tests, and if one of its primary values is to identify children who are more capable than they appear on traditional tests, then there should be a fairly sizable group securing significantly higher scores on the Games. Should this finding hold true, individual members of the latter group are to be given the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children to determine to what extent the abilities measured by the Davis-Eells Games correspond to the Performance IQ on the individual test.

This research project, investigating aspects of the test validity that are not directly claimed by the authors, obviously cannot then either validate or invalidate the test. However, this and similar studies may help to clarify the meaning of the new test in varying school populations. And should it prove to be "culture-fair" to our minority-group children, the teaching of Mike and others like him may be due for changes.

—GRACE T. ALTUS, chief of guidance service, Santa Barbara County Schools, Goleta, California.

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### "Building the Curriculum"

PART I of the Report of the Superintendent of Schools of the City of New York for the school year 1952-1953 is entitled *Building the Curriculum*. This 80-page publication tells in considerable detail how the curriculum of the New York City schools has been built through the cooperative efforts of school people and members of the community. It deals in particular with the functions and activities of the Bureau of Curriculum Research, and has implications for cooperative curriculum research.

The Bureau of Curriculum Research uses the scientific method to solve problems concerning the curriculum, its content, methods and procedures and its application to teaching-learning situations. Research is a prime requisite in the process of curriculum development which deals with organizing and implementing curricular improvement.

Two double-page charts in the report provide graphic summaries of these two processes—research and development. The first outlines the

functions, activities and services of the Bureau of Curriculum Research as follows:

*Research.* To carry on curriculum research and experimentation and apply research findings to curriculum problems.

*Production.* To produce curriculum publications and edit curriculum materials.

*Coordination and Staff Training.* To work with divisions, bureaus, districts, schools, teachers and agencies on curriculum problems.

*Professional and Public Relations.* To disseminate knowledge of curriculum problems and developments through conferences and meetings.

*Laboratory Services.* To operate a curriculum center and curriculum laboratory services.

The second chart on "Who Shapes the Curriculum" shows clearly the relationships of various school agencies to the initiation, development and completion of curriculum projects. This chart outlines the roles of teachers and supervisors, parents, the community, school and district curriculum committees, curriculum planning committees, bureaus, directors and divisions, as well as the Board of Education, the Board of Superintendents, the Division of Curriculum Development and the Curriculum Council.

More than half the report is devoted to detailed accounts of how curriculum research in New York is directed toward the solution of current problems by providing information on the value of different kinds of instructional materials and by helping to get good practices into the classroom. Current projects in a wide variety of curriculum areas are described briefly: language arts, health, science, foreign language,

music, art, vocational subjects, moral and spiritual values, safety, reading materials for mentally retarded children, and adult education. Considerably more detail is given in the report to several experimental action-research programs now in operation.

A chapter on "Working on Curriculum" stresses the importance of the climate and atmosphere in which the classroom teacher works. It also tells about the activities of curriculum personnel in the Bureau of Curriculum Research both at the Curriculum Center and the individual schools. Twenty-five curriculum assistants work jointly in the Bureau of Curriculum Research and in the district offices of the assistant superintendents. In a school year, a curriculum assistant on the average participates in 123 group conferences, discusses individual problems in teaching-learning situations with 242 teachers and makes 105 visits to schools in his district. *Building the Curriculum* describes his activities as a "resource in knowledge and experience" for the 32,000 classroom teachers in over 700 schools. The report describes the ways in which curriculum personnel work with school divisions and with district and school committees, how they help to organize and participate in workshops with both teachers and parents and how they have established curriculum centers and libraries in the school districts throughout the city.

New York City's program of curriculum research and development, the report concludes, "is devoted to the task of finding and channeling better and truer answers to the many questions facing teachers, supervisors, parents and children."

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