A General High School Organizes
To Meet Career Needs of Youth

Through intelligent planning a general high school builds a "Career Program" that gives all of its young people better opportunities for a fair chance in life.

In presenting a curricular experiment in a general or traditional high school in Denver, a brief description of the nature of the community and patrons is necessary. This district is one of five high school districts in Denver, Colorado. It includes most of the lowest socioeconomic area in the city. The high school population is composed of approximately 32 percent white or "Anglo," 35 percent Negro, 25 percent Spanish-American, and 8 percent Oriental. The minority problem creates a special need in this community for preparation to enhance educational and vocational opportunities.

More than half of the pupils entering Manual High in the tenth grade do not remain to graduate. Though the reason for drop-out often given is that the pupil is leaving school to take a job, the fact is that most pupils drop out because of a lack of interest and are then forced to go to work.

There is a general academic and intellectual retardation among Manual High students due to a variety of cultural, hereditary and environmental factors. Attitudes of pupils are characterized by vague life goals. Interest in vocations is frequently limited to immediate job placement, with no regard to future advancement. There is an urgency to get jobs early with little or no planning or preparation.

Parents and teachers recognize that the need for concern about getting a job and earning a living is reinforced by the economic pressures common to many of them. These pupils find a few part-time jobs; some are employed in seasonal work but tend to drift in and out of the school placement office repeatedly because they have as yet no real salable skills and have failed to develop attitudes and habits to improve their employability—self control, courtesy, honesty and dependability. The planning of a 3 year high school sequence of courses involves for students remote goals often beyond their range of thinking. With some, their periods of school enrollment are as irregular as their job tenure.

Needs of Manual High Pupils

In 1949 a new high school building was planned to replace an obsolete and antiquated building. A decision was reached to make the planning of the new building a product of the combined thinking of the pupils, the com-

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Immunity, and the teaching and administrative staff of the school. The planning group early came to the conclusion that the “New Manual” should be planned in terms of the needs of its pupils. Because of this criterion an intensive study was made of these needs.

A report was drawn up based on a study of the school and of the community. This report included findings on the vocational and educational needs of pupils as shown by analyses of the Kuder Vocational Preference Profiles, the range and distribution of academic aptitudes, and the extent to which pupils were enrolled in college preparatory classes. Information as to the length of time pupils stayed in school and why they left was compiled. Vocational experiences of former Manual pupils were investigated and the work status of the pupils in school at that time was determined. To this wealth of information was added that gained from a questionnaire survey of community opinion in respect to the opportunities Manual should provide.

All this study and investigation served to reinforce and confirm the belief that the needs of Manual youth are different from those of youth in other sections of Denver in that:

1. Fewer pupils go to college
2. Fewer take college preparatory classes
3. More go to work immediately upon being graduated or leave school before graduation to take jobs
4. More go into unskilled and semiskilled labor.

Examination of more recent data indicates that these differences still exist today, possibly to a greater degree than was pointed out by the original report.

In the planning, the needs of all youth were considered as well. The “Ten Imperative Needs of Youth,” as delineated by the Educational Policies Commission of the NEA had been adopted by the Denver Public Schools as intrinsic in its curricular objectives. One need (the first) stood out as particularly pertinent in the Manual District: “All youth need to develop salable skills and those understandings and attitudes that make the worker an intelligent and productive participant in economic life. To this end youth need supervised work experience as well as education in the skills and knowledge of their occupation.”

If the new building was to be functional in meeting these needs, the curriculum, too, must be carefully examined so that the physical plant of the new building could reflect a realistic curriculum which would meet the needs of the pupils as determined by the staff, the pupils, and the community.

**Adjusting the Curriculum To Meet the Needs**

The Manual faculty had for several years been revising the content of course offerings to provide learnings that would be realistic in meeting the needs of Manual pupils. In the regular

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program of courses it has always been possible for a student to follow a sequence which would provide a good background for future employment. However, too many pupils failed to find in the general program the immediate answers they sought, and dropouts continued to be high. For the potential drop-out a special program seemed advisable.

This program was named the "Career Program" in deference to the heavy vocational implications of the needs of Manual youth. The keynote of the new curriculum seemed to be that if pupils whose interests and abilities lie, not in academic fields, but in immediately-practical pre-employment activities could be kept in school longer through such a program as the one presented here, youth and community would both be served better. They might often stay until graduation. The youth would be provided a better general education. They would have more time to develop good behavior patterns through experience in wholesome social situations. They could be helped in job placement and in adjustment as citizens and workers.

The Career Program keeps open two possible goals, graduation or earlier terminal education, both providing better chances for employment.

The traditional high school courses leading to graduation are highly esteemed in the Manual community. The Career Program, as planned, will be flexible enough not only to allow, but to encourage, its members to graduate. Movement into or out of the program, under guidance, would be encouraged whenever individual needs could be served best. Elective phases of the program would place the Career Program pupil in many of the same classes with pupils following the traditional high school pattern. Throughout the Career Program any limitations of opportunity for educational experi-
Sewing is part of the homemaking course.

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ences offered in the regular program of the school would be only those set by the pupil's own interest and ability. Initially, it is structured as follows:

10th Grade
Pre-employment Activities 2 periods
Combined English-Social Science-Guidance 2 periods
Physical Education—Health or ROTC 1 period
Elective 1 period

11th Grade
Pre-employment Activities 2 periods
Combined English-Social Science-Guidance 2 periods
Physical Education—Health or ROTC 1 period
Elective 1 period

12th Grade
Pre-employment Activities 2 periods
General Academic-Guidance 1 period
Electives 3 periods

It should be noted here that the "Career Program" runs concurrently with the traditional high school curriculum and also the "college track" course in the school. The needs of some boys and girls are still met more satisfactorily by these courses of study. The number of pupils who drop out of school between the completion of 9th grade and graduation from high school because of lack of interest indicates that approximately one-half of the pupils who enter high school should be screened as possible candidates for the Career Program. Movement into and out of the program under guidance would be possible at any advisable time during the high school years. Maximum development of the program might well include 40 percent to 50 percent of Manual pupils. Such a number is too large, however, for initial experiments. From among possible candidates initial experiments involve fifty 10th grade and fifty 11th grade...
A Manual High student learns welding.

pupils. Their interests and abilities are in the areas of industrial arts and homemaking skills. Projected areas for pre-employment activities (to be called "career laboratories") include business, art, music and distributive education.

At the twelfth grade level possibilities will be provided students for part-time supervised work experience, or for vocational training for half a day at Denver's Emily Griffith Opportunity School. Manual High has already been experimenting in these experiences and has a Cooperative Sales class in which pupils learn principles of salesmanship and distributive occupations, concurrently with part-time supervised work experience in this area. Some senior pupils are learning trades, side-by-side with post-graduates and adults, in the Opportunity School courses. They spend half a day in these classes, earning credit for graduation, and the other half day at Manual in regular classes. This has proved very satisfactory for a few students on an experimental basis. It is hoped that the Career Program will eventually guide many students into these same classes upon graduation from Manual. Many could proceed from pre-vocational to vocational training, then to job placement.

In selecting pupils for inclusion in the Career Program, the following criteria are used:

1. The applicants must be screened by interview and evaluation of test results and records by a qualified vocational counselor.

2. Academic aptitude should be in the range of the upper three quartiles of the school.

3. Expressed interest should be in areas of industrial arts, home economics or other areas of the curriculum to be made available as activity centers for the career program.

4. There should be some evidence of aptitude in the area of interest either from class experience, work experience, or test data.

5. A limited interest in academic class work is expressed or evident.

6. Factors in family, social, economic or health areas make high school graduation doubtful.

The double period of pre-employment activity, as shown, occupies one-third of the pupil's time. Learning-units include a variety of processes.

In the boys' shop program special teachers are brought in to provide units in such areas as welding, sheetmetal work, electric motors, auto repairs, body and fender work, among others. These special instructors are secured through the Emily Griffith Opportunity School. The purpose of these units
is to provide the boy with experience in a variety of fields among which it is hoped he will find one which he will wish to pursue in a definite vocational training course, either before or after graduation at Opportunity School, or in actual on-the-job training.

In a similar way the girls' program in addition to homemaking training would make use of special instructors in such areas as cosmetology, millinery, power sewing machine operation, and commercial food preparation.

Similar training in the areas of distributive education, art, music and business education, are being considered for possible extension of the career program.

No attempt is being made to train completely for a job or vocation, but rather to prepare better for the entry level and to provide practical occupational information. Field trips and excursions to many industrial enterprises hiring a variety of skilled and semiskilled workers are being undertaken.

In the double "academic" period, the English, Social Science, and Guidance graduation requirements are met. The subject matter differs from the traditional only in emphasis, materials and in the motivation of the pupils. The academic teachers are weaving their materials of instruction intimately with the various units being studied in the Career Laboratories. Pupils read trade journals, stories of work and industry. The basic skills of English and the concepts of history are still taught, but a vocational flavor and emphasis have been added. A unit of work in the laboratory often encourages the pupil to learn more about a particular job area by reading books and pamphlets provided in the academic class. The task of relating the academic curriculum to the laboratory curriculum provides a continuous challenge to teachers to make the work vital and meaningful in terms of well-perceived job goals.

Concomitants and Resources

Specially trained and oriented teachers have been selected for the Career Laboratory work. They possess a rare combination of job knowledge, ability to teach practical skills and to inspire boys and girls to prepare for a life work. Academic teachers must have vision, imagination and motivating skill to continuously relate their fields to the world of work.

The Emily Griffith Opportunity School, with its many years of experience in the field of vocational and pre-vocational training, is of immeasurable value in the planning and executing of the program. The use of equipment and staff from the Opportunity School is liberal and valuable.

A full-time, qualified, vocational counselor has been assigned to Manual. He provides accurate occupational information for the Career Program as well as for the counseling program of the entire school. A general program of creating vocational awareness in Manual pupils has been inaugurated. This has been accomplished by a "Career" newsheet, classroom charts, occupational talks and movies. All pupils complete "My Plan," a series of fill-in sheets, that cause the pupil to analyze himself and a vocational choice carefully. The vocational counselor supervises aptitude testing for the selection of Career pupils, interviews them in
screening, and provides individual vocational counseling on call. He is also assisting in coordinating the program and is working constantly with the Career teachers in curriculum planning, in enrichment of the program, and in being a resource person for the program.

Manual also possesses a job placement office called the Occupational Adjustment Service. A teacher spends half-time in this office locating part-time and full-time jobs, placing both graduates and pupils in school in jobs for which they are qualified, and working closely with the vocational counselor and the teachers in the Career Program to relate school and work.

It must be realized the Career Program is in its infancy, is experimental at present, and will be expanding and improving. Devices for evaluating the program are being included in it. Many of the outcomes and values may not be known for years, but the Manual staff and community feel the experiment will meet more realistically the needs of a selected portion of its pupils.

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FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS

in a Core Program

Do pupils in a core program develop effective control of fundamental skills? This author reports results of observation and study on this important question.

Within the past two years there has appeared upon the educational scene a rash of books and magazine articles generally condemning the quality of public school programs. Because of the extremely wide circulation of these publications, their effect upon the public at large has become a matter of serious concern to all school people. From the start the “progressive” segment of education has received the brunt of the attack. It is equally apparent that the newer curricular organizations of our public schools, variously called “core,” “general education,” “common learnings,” “unified studies,” and “life adjustment” have also been focal points for this attack.

It is generally agreed that modern education must take a more positive step in “selling its wares” to the public. At all levels educators and sympathetic lay groups, therefore, need to discuss ways and means of allaying the fears and misconceptions that have been growing in the minds of the public regarding their educational programs.

Target of Criticism

But school people need not have waited for these latest recriminations to take action in defense of their programs. Nor is it necessary to take a look into the dim and dark past to see that all has not been “sweetness and light” in our school public relations.