

Curriculum Research

Column Editor: William M. Alexander

Contributor: William H. Bristow

A Check List on Research

RESearch IS THE TOOL by which critical evaluations are made of programs, plans and policies. Many of the assumptions on which curriculum practice rests—in both elementary and secondary schools—still need to be critically tested. We are in the position of having accepted principles for the curriculum change without having projected or tested curriculum patterns and design. As a result we try to achieve new goals while retaining old patterns not suitable to these goals. Often this means confusion. A clear example is the number of secondary schools still maintaining a 40-minute period, thus forcing a curriculum pattern long obsolete. Another is the practice of having a school day with the same hours for pupils and teachers. Such practice does not allow for the staff work necessary in a modern curriculum program. The research needed to develop practices and design to square with the principle has just not been accomplished.

Other obvious developments which require research to determine suitable practices are: Rejection of failure and non-promotion as a means of curriculum adjustment; concept of a broad flexible program to meet individual differences and differences in classes, schools and interest groups; less acceptance of homogeneous grouping because of difficulty of administration and as

philosophically questionable; failure of track systems which have been found cumbersome, unwieldy and generally unacceptable because of complexity, stigma and difficulty of administration; separate, unrelated courses and lessons which have been found not to meet the test of integration and unity; rejection of chronological and logical arrangement of materials because of lack of relation to pupils' interests and needs; grade standards as no longer having validity in the face of research on the growth and development patterns of children; vocational training at an early age as undesirable and impractical.

A review of the resources reporting curriculum research shows three things:

First, there is only a small amount of actual research reported dealing with the two central problems of the curriculum: (a) the design of the curriculum and (b) the selection and the organization and teaching of learning experiences, or the *what, how* and *when* to teach. There is much more research on related problems of growth, learning, guidance and group dynamics. All of this is important. It is not, however, a direct attack on the curriculum problems.

Second, while much work is going on in the field of curriculum improvement, too little of this is designed so

To develop thinking, informed, mature citizens—

To create a lasting interest in reading for pleasure and profit—

To promote vocabulary growth—

Use the **READER'S DIGEST EDUCATIONAL EDITION**

Winner of a Freedoms Foundation Award "For outstanding achievement in bringing about a better understanding of the American Way of Life."

Helpful Features New This September:

1. **STUDY GUIDES E-X-P-A-N-D-E-D** from 32 to 40 pages! *Eight* additional pages bring student supplement up to 24 pages each month. Teaching Guide provides 16 idea-packed pages.
2. **STANDARDIZED VOCABULARY TESTS**—Form A in October, Form B in May. Now you can measure your students' growth in word power!

Reader's Digest Educational Edition is only 20¢ per copy in class sets of 10 or more, with Teacher's Edition free.

READER'S DIGEST EDUCATIONAL SERVICE, INC. Pleasantville, N.Y.

that it meets the test of research. Teachers and supervisors generally have not been trained in the rudiments of research.

Third, criticism about education and the accomplishments of education leave us in a difficult spot because so many of the hypotheses on which practice rests have not been subjected to critical study and research. This is true even though curriculum planning is now on a better basis and in better hands than ever before.

Check List

- Use research findings in formulating programs, in presenting material to teachers, parents, and boards of education. (*Monroe's Encyclopedia* and the *Review of Educational Research* should be standard for all professional libraries.)
- Encourage school and inter-school

projects where teachers and supervisors work together to solve problems. In all projects see that someone accepts responsibility for checking up on research, and for making sure that good research procedures are followed.

- Extend collaboration among groups through reporting, planning and joint staff work, and establish a clear definition of responsibility of various groups and individuals.
- Plan cooperative work and reporting with other school systems engaged in like projects. (Use School Study Council channels.)
- Use experienced personnel from colleges and universities and agencies as resources in planning and carrying forward projects.
- Cooperate with professional teacher organizations (local, state, national) in encouraging, reporting and disseminating research activities.

• See that the result of local research work, no matter how small, is reported to the local staff and in journals and other publications. The local press is also a good means of reporting research.

• Organize meetings around research themes and encourage others to do so.

• Prepare and disseminate "what research says" materials through special reports, meetings, bulletins, committees and publications.

• Distribute materials on the design of curriculum research projects covering such aspects as: identifying a problem; initiating a project; designing an experiment or study; carrying out a study; getting evidence; making generalizations; preparing and disseminating reports; interpreting and using reports for improvement.

• Provide good work conditions for curriculum and research personnel—where teacher participants can have available the resources needed for work.

• Provide consulting service for staff members engaged in projects. Provide opportunities for staff members to bring their problems to some consultant for help. Organize "clinics" where projects can be considered. Encourage associations, committees, schools and individuals to seek the assistance of trained research personnel in organizing projects.

• Establish appropriate staff positions for research.

• Establish training research for teachers generally and for those selected to carry on special projects. Provide research courses as part of the in-service program and in pre-service requirements.

Research calls for leadership on many levels and in many areas. Good leadership will find ways to work, once it is given a chance.

—WILLIAM H. BRISTOW, *director, Bureau of Curriculum Research, New York City Schools, New York.*

For



Your

READING PROGRAM

READING FOR MEANING

Guiler-Coleman

... we are proud to announce that this remedial reading series has been extended to include grades 4 and 5. Books 6-12 are newly-revised this year.

READING WITH PHONICS

Hay-Wingo

... a one-book phonics program for the primary grades. The product of years of teaching experience and study, this book teaches the child a recognition and understanding of our written and spoken language.

TIME TO READ

Leary-Reichert-Reely

... a supplementary reading series for grades 1-9. Filled with stories, poems, and narratives high in interest value, this series succeeds in bridging the gap between basal reading and independent reading.

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

Chicago

Philadelphia

Copyright © 1955 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.