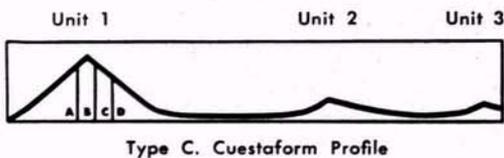
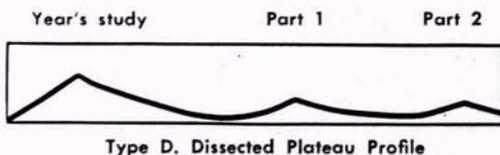


will sketch out tentative unit plans for the entire year. Then as the year progresses, these preliminary outlines are revised and refined, but the major planning for the year has already been accomplished. The pattern would be:



Or if the group decides on the major areas, but does not work out all the details of each, the profile might be:



The chief difference between this pattern and Type B—Overlapping Configuration—is that these units do not terminate as an entity, but operate as phases of the year's work. For this reason no vertical lines were put on the chart.

In any case, no requirement is made as to a particular sequence or planning pattern; no attempt has been made to standardize procedure, except to give help and suggestions for possible next steps; each group develops its own system. There are other matters that have to be planned, and other phases of the program that require consideration. Learning to organize and plan is a complex of skills that greatly adds to the competence and confidence with which the pupils take their place in our democratic society. †

WILLIAM H. NAULT

Can CURRICULUM GUIDES Be Effective?

Each year much time and effort in school systems are expended in planning and constructing curriculum guides. This article suggests that certain conditions of their involvement in preparing such guides directly affect teachers' use of them.

THE SEARCH FOR WAYS to improve school practices is the never ending task of educators in a democratic society. This task carries with it the challenge and responsibility for critically examining current beliefs and practices so that new information and insights might be gained which will make possible desired improvement.

In a great number of school systems throughout the United States the production of curriculum guides by members of the local staff is the method most widely used by school people to improve the curriculum. In spite of the time, effort and money which go into the preparation of these materials a survey of the literature reveals only

limited study in the area of the use and effectiveness of locally produced curriculum guides.

In a recent study conducted in three eastern communities an effort was made to examine the relationships between the ways of working in the development of curriculum materials and the use made of these by teachers. Sources of evidence were teachers, curriculum workers and administrators.

A great majority of the school people participating in the study saw teacher involvement as being of critical importance in the preparation of curriculum guides. It was evident, however, that there is a difference between saying that the effectiveness of a program of curriculum improvement depends upon the involvement of teachers and that the effectiveness of curriculum guides depends upon the involvement of teachers in the production of guides. Involvement in the latter case seemed to be a matter of participation, something which could be determined by being or not being a member of the producing group. While this is a rather common perception of involvement, the findings of the study were more concerned with the larger picture of ego-involvement, or one in which the individual identifies with the piece of material and experiences a somewhat possessive feeling toward it because of the way his feelings and ideas were sought and respected. Even though an individual teacher did not actually contribute an idea, if communication were open for him to do so, if he desired, he often felt quite involved in the guide. From the data one could draw the conclusion that these teachers felt

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that involvement of teachers and actual use of the materials were highly correlated. The results of this particular study, therefore, suggested that teacher involvement, in its broader definition, was *closely associated* with teacher use of the curriculum materials.

Teacher Involvement

Another interesting observation of the data gathered was the conclusion that the participants in the study were involved whether or not they had belonged to a deliberately planned committee. They brought to their use of the guide their own attitudes, perceptions and meanings of such things as educational theory, curriculum improvement and curriculum materials just as surely as if they had helped to write the content. They brought their own experience to the suggested techniques just as surely as if they had changed these attitudes, understandings and perceptions through the interaction with children and adults in relation to the guide. All of these understandings become a part of their use of the piece of material, and in this sense teachers were involved whether deliberately or not.

It was also evident that a deliberate plan for teacher involvement cannot be counted on in and of itself. A study of the questionnaire and interview data revealed that involvement did not positively influence teacher use of curriculum guides if:

1. It was sham involvement or "window dressing."

2. It meant hard work always after a day with children.

3. There was not a let-up in the program of teacher-produced materials.

4. Teachers were involved to rubber-stamp the ideas of others.

5. Teachers did not see a need for the material being developed.

6. Teachers who did not have the respect of their fellow teachers were asked to develop the guide.

7. Involvement was seen in relation to outside rewards such as promotion.

On the other hand, according to the teachers, involvement did positively influence their use of guides by:

1. Making for better understanding of the guide.

2. Contributing to teacher morale.

3. Making the guide more practical and less theoretical.

4. Providing opportunities for teachers to grow in insights.

5. Providing for better horizontal and vertical articulation.

Many teachers throughout the study commented on the importance of the *quality* of involvement. They wanted the invitation to assist with the development of materials to be sincere and guileless. They wanted an opportunity to be involved in an unfragmented way from the beginning of the curriculum study until the guide was made available. They saw the importance of having adequate time and facilities for planning and working together. Over and over again, the participants in the study emphasized the importance of the climate for working. If the atmosphere was one of mutual self-

respect and permissiveness, that is, if there was a feeling that "we *really* want your ideas," and "your ideas *are* important," the teachers presented evidence that they used the materials and found them to be of value. In short, the *quality* of involvement seemed to stand out as an extremely important aspect of the development of curriculum guides.

Since it is rather a common practice among school systems to employ the services of an outside consultant to assist with the development of a curriculum study an effort was made to assess the feelings of teachers toward this type of resource. Although most of the teachers felt the need and desirability of utilizing consultant help they also expressed concern, from their own experience, that there is a tendency for the "expert" to "take over" the study and destroy some of the group thinking which makes the piece of curriculum material of value to the local school district. These teachers saw the importance of having consultant help which would contribute to the development of the curriculum guide without taking away the teachers' feelings that the end product was *theirs* and not the consultant's. It would seem to follow that if teachers are to be genuinely involved and are to identify with the curriculum guide, an important consideration is the judicious use of the curriculum specialist who can conceivably move the teachers ahead in their efforts or can destroy their relationship to the finished product.

Another aspect of involvement that stood out as being important was the role of the building principal in the

over-all development of the curriculum material. In most instances the teachers involved in this study felt it to be of great importance that the principal be involved in the curriculum study to such an extent that he could help teachers understand and use the curriculum guide. In her study of the work of the consultant, Lawler¹ makes a special emphasis of the importance of the building principal's knowing the purpose of the curriculum change, what it means for the classroom teaching of teachers actually expected to change, and ways in which he can further the effectiveness of the change and give security to the teachers.

Implementation

From the foregoing, it can be seen that implementation of a curriculum guide and the actual development process cannot be separated—they are intricately interrelated. For many, involvement and implementation, as associated with the use teachers make of curriculum guides, were actually synonymous.

Implementation was considered as a necessary feature of a curriculum guide to the teachers participating in this study. "Just handing out the guide is not enough," responded many teachers repeatedly. While in general, principals and other administrative officers were not criticized for requiring use of the guides they were criticized for showing feelings of indifference or for being unable to give concrete help on suggested techniques. The number of times the building principal was men-

tioned for failing to give help indicates the importance of this administrative position in the over-all organizing of resources in curriculum improvement.

In spite of the expressed acceptance of implementation as necessary to successful use of the guide, the evidence also pointed conclusively to the fact that implementation cannot be evaluated in and of itself. It was not unusual, for example, to find teachers who described their particular school's plan of implementation in detail, and still responded "None" to the question, "What kind of help did you receive in using your guide?" Expressions like ". . . they sat on the stage and we asked questions about the guide. . .," ". . . a small committee was the *guiding force in putting across* the ideas of the guide. . .," and others suggested a we-they relationship deepened by the implementation program.

In many ways, the manner of working and the amount and quality of communication during the development of the material set the stage for its implementation. In those cases where the degree of involvement was sufficient for understanding, teachers labeled their particular guide as being "self-implementing."

The above seemed to suggest that implementation, like involvement, as associated with teacher use of guides cannot be evaluated apart from the larger situation.

Suggested Guidelines

If curriculum guides are to be used to improve instruction—and, according to most of the school people participating in the study, they can be—ways of working must be given con-

¹ Marcella R. Lawler, *Work of the Consultant*. Typewritten Doctoral Project, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949, p. 145.

tinued attention by curriculum workers. It seems imperative that continued experimentation be carried forward to discover new and promising techniques of working together to improve learning experiences. Social invention is sorely needed in the entire area of involvement and communication in the improvement of instruction. No greater challenge to supervision exists than to provide the dynamic and creative leadership needed in such an endeavor.

Certain improvisations emerged from the study as a whole which were used in formulating suggested guidelines for school people charged with the responsibility of providing leadership in the development or evaluation of curriculum guides. Many of these relate to the discussion above, while others are drawn from portions of the total study not discussed in this article.

- Since curriculum improvement efforts are most successful when there is provision for continuity and relationship among a variety of activities, is the guide a part of a total on-going program of curriculum improvement?

- Since teaching is improved only as individual attitudes and perceptions change, does use of the guide bring about modifications in the values, understandings and the skills of those concerned with the teaching situation?

- Does the guide provide for taking teachers where they are, recognizing the kinds and quality of their experience?

- Does the guide provide for taking children where they are, recognizing the kinds and quality of their experience?

- Is the content related to the pri-

mary purpose of the guide as expressed by teachers?

- Is there appropriate content for all grade levels using the guide?

- Are suggested source materials available and usable?

- Is the content sufficiently concrete and specific so that teachers can utilize the suggested methods and approaches?

- Is the content practical and realistic in terms of the teachers and children involved?

- Is the content adaptable to the needs and interests of the children?

- Is the program of implementation an on-going program that will help new teachers use the guide?

- Does the program of implementation allow for an "on-call" type of consultant help for individuals or groups of teachers?

- Do teachers have an opportunity to help plan the program of implementation and to indicate the types of assistance needed and desired?

- Does the guide invite self-implementation?

- Are there provisions for a continuing program of evaluation of the curriculum guide?

- Are building principals involved in the development of the guide?

- Are teachers involved directly or indirectly in the development of the guide to the extent that they understand and approve of the purposes and content of the guide?

- Is the quality of involvement such that the teachers have good feelings toward the guide?

- Does outside consultant help contribute to the plan and purposes of the guide as viewed by the school staff?

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