Curriculum News

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• Eighty-six school districts in Oregon have requested application forms from the Curriculum Section of the State Department of Education for the submission of curriculum improvement plans under the curriculum improvement program adopted by the 1957 Legislature. Plans have been received from 54 districts including those participating in the two county joint plans. A total of 68 plans have been received since some districts have submitted more than one plan. Forty-eight plans have been finally approved. Others are either being processed or are tentatively approved while being held for some revisions. These plans, either approved or in process, commit approximately $35,000. Statewide curriculum improvement plans, utilizing funds available to the Department of Education under the law, have also been approved. In general, they provide for carrying on and completing the state-wide activities in curriculum scope and sequence development and administrator's curriculum conferences begun in the past two years. Some $25,000 of curriculum improvement funds remain to be allocated to school districts this school year. A considerable number of plans are known to be under development by school districts for early submission.

• Establishment of a truly modern curriculum in college preparatory mathematics is the primary objective of the Commission on Mathematics of the College Entrance Examination Board according to its latest pamphlet on objectives. The commission has undertaken this task in the belief that proper mathematical instruction in high school is of the utmost importance in the scientific and technical education of our young people, and that the present curriculum is badly adapted to the actual needs of our students. Recent developments in mathematics itself, the importance of mathematics in general education, and the shifting needs of science and technology now require the adoption of new points of view toward many portions of elementary mathematics and the replacement of certain topics, which once were of importance, with others which are now considered to be of even greater importance. Areas in which the present curriculum needs revision may be listed: (a) Too much attention is given, particularly in algebra, to routine manipulation in artificial situations, and not enough emphasis is laid on fundamental concepts. (b) Deductive reasoning is taught chiefly in connection with plane and solid geometry, and its application to other parts of mathematics is largely ignored. Its use in algebra and trigonometry should be expanded. (c) Too often the usual geometry course consists of rote memorization of sequences of theorems and fails to explain the deductive process clearly. (d) Many topics which are now included were important at one time for applied science, but have become obsolete. These should be replaced by topics of current importance. Examples of obsolete topics are: extensive solution of triangles by logarithms, de-

ductive methods in solid geometry, and Horner's Method for finding the roots of a polynomial. (e) Many newer topics of importance in mathematics and its application have little or no place in the course of study. Examples of modern subjects which might be included are descriptive statistics, statistical inference, elementary properties of sets, and the basic ideas of modern algebra. Many of these topics are more elementary than topics now in our secondary school curriculum. (f) Mathematics is too often presented as a series of isolated tricks, so that students get no view of the subject as a whole, and do not realize its position as a creative endeavor in our civilization.

• The curriculum committee for the study of gifted children of the Denver Public Schools reports that instruction for pupils in grades 4, 5, and 6 who have specific academic aptitude will be centered about the development of independent study habits and critical thinking. Effort will also be made to build attitudes of social responsibility which such endowment entails. A fourth objective in this basic program is constant diligence in observing pupil interest and ability in all activities and making the pupil aware of these as assets not only in a career but in his personal life. No program has been specified for kindergarten through Grade 3. This is the period when identification takes place. The sequence of subject matter—suggested reading in 4B; science in 4A; language arts in 5B; mathematics in 5A; geography in 6B; history in 6A—may be said to be arbitrary since arguments can be submitted for any one of several different sequences. But, for the sake of consistency not only for the individual pupil but also for planning subsequent experiences, an established pattern, at least

for a trial period, has been projected. It was recommended that schools with programs for the gifted follow this sequence in developing the skills indicated. These experiences, it is to be understood, are supplementary to the regular instruction which goes on in the classroom. To assist teachers in developing work of this nature, the committee for the study of the gifted is preparing a statement showing how to extend the material at hand so that these skills may be developed from them.

• Glens Falls Public Schools, New York, has planned a three-year project called Improving the Teaching of World Affairs (ITWA). It is designed to demonstrate that the teaching of world affairs by subject matter and method can be accomplished: (a) without undue additional funds, once ways are revealed; and (b) without disrupting an otherwise satisfactory on-going curriculum. The unique features of ITWA include its application to: (a) all grades K-12; and (b) all subject areas, in one school system. Its chief aim is to introduce a world point of view wherever possible into all classrooms, as well as community situations. Planned as a three-year project, ITWA was inaugurated in Glens Falls Public Schools in September 1957. The head of the Social Studies Department, HAROLD M. LONG, has been given released time, an additional teacher has been employed, and an office secretary engaged, to make the program possible.

• "Teaching Career Month"—a new plan to dramatize the importance of the teacher in our national life—will be inaugurated by the National Education Association this month with the cooperation of more than 50 professional and lay organizations. Looking to the success of other "special events" public relations programs such as American Edu-

cation Week and the Back-to-School campaign, the NEA has proposed "Teaching Career Month" to focus national attention on the recruitment, training, and retention of top-quality teachers. T. M. STINNETT, executive secretary of the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, outlined the dimensions of this high priority educational problem at a planning meeting held in NEA headquarters January 9. Later in the meeting, the idea was presented to members of the Joint Committees of the NEA and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, and the NEA and the National School Boards Association meeting together in Washington.

• National Recreation Month (June) will offer educators the opportunity to show how schools are preparing students to make wise use of their leisure time, according to the National Recreation Association, sponsor of the observance. The NRA points out that today Americans have more leisure time than working time, and that recreation might well become the fourth "R."

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The purpose of this bulletin is to provide specific assistance to districts in establishing and maintaining special educational programs for educable, mentally retarded pupils. The publication deals with all aspects of planning—organization, administration, instruction and guidance. Particularly well done are parts III-V titled, "Suggested Techniques for Teachers," "Sample Units," and "Subject Matter Areas and Activities." Using split columns, the characteristics or problems shown by pupils are related to suggested understandings and procedures for teachers. The sample units are detailed and complete, as are the suggestions for modifying and adapting the various subject-matter areas for the educable mentally handicapped. The bibliography is complete and useful.

• Davidson County Schools. *Filmstrips, Records, Slides: A Routine for Processing, Storing and Circulating.* Nashville, Tenn.: the Schools, 1956. 52 p. $1.50.

As part of an in-service program, school librarians developed a way of organizing and circulating the many aids constantly being added to the county's materials centers. This publication describes the routines for cataloging and circulating filmstrips, records, and slides. Highly specialized and carefully written, the publication may impress some audio-visual people as too elaborate.

• Board of Education, City of New York. *Instructional Films and Tapes.* Curriculum Bulletin 1956-57 Series, No. 2. New York: the Board, 1957. 144 p.

This publication is a complete listing of the instructional films and tapes available from the Board's Bureau of Audio-Visual Instruction. The films are listed alphabetically with a brief annotation for each including title, running time, producer, year of issue, curriculum area, school level, and a synoptic summary. A topical guide directs the user to film titles arranged in 24 categories. The tapes are of the WNYE broadcast series. The catalog should be useful to teachers in the New York City Schools.