

# Promising Curriculum Practices in the High School

A school administrator summarizes some promising and forward looking high school curriculum practices.

*This excerpt is the summary of a presentation by Dr. Gilchrist at the Conference on the American High School, October 28-30, 1957, sponsored by the University of Chicago in collaboration with the National Citizens Council for Better Schools. This excerpt is used with the permission of the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois.*<sup>1</sup>

**T**HE SPECIFIC practices of the high school of the future in a particular community should certainly be the result of the thinking and testing of the educators and laymen of that community. I believe that if the curriculum development procedures proposed below are followed curriculum practices will evolve with the characteristics enumerated.

## Curriculum Development Practices

Teachers will be involved in curriculum development. They will be employed on an annual basis and time will be set aside for curriculum work. Local leadership, supplemented by specialists from outside the local school system, will assist teachers in working out answers to problems which are of mutual concern. Laymen will participate. Communication with everyone affected by the educational program will be recognized as essential and the best tech-

niques available will be utilized. Knowledge of adolescent development, learning and society needs will be respected as bases upon which a sound program must be built.

## Curriculum Practices

1. The goals of a high school will be clearly defined in terms of the behavior, attitudes, values, skills, knowledge and overt actions which are important for effective citizenship in a democracy. The program of the school will be appraised in relation to the degree to which these goals are being attained and hard-headed decisions consistent with the evidence will be made to cut out, revise or add subject matter or methods.

2. Laymen and teachers will recognize that education broadly conceived is a total community responsibility and that the high school, the home, the church, business and industry, and youth serving agencies must all assume their appropriate responsibilities. This means that each must be a part of the total team but that each must also be held responsible and helped to assume its primary function.

The high school exists primarily for citizenship education. Since the ability

<sup>1</sup> Francis P. Chase and Harold A. Anderson. *The American High School*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, copyright 1958.

**ROBERT S. GILCHRIST** is superintendent of schools, University City, Missouri. He is a past president of ASCD.

to think is so essential in a democracy, intellectual development is the central task of the high school. Values, problem solving ability, skills and knowledge become important outcomes—all developed in proper relationship to each other and to the over-all goal of intellectual development. The high school has a team responsibility to assume in the areas of vocational preparation, health, leisure living, and home and family living.

3. Every pupil and his parents will be known well by at least one faculty member. These faculty members, together with trained guidance specialists, will identify the specific needs of the pupils, these needs being respected as determinants of the curriculum.

4. Each pupil will be part of a basic group taught by the teacher mentioned in #3 above, so that group guidance can most effectively take place and that pupils can be helped to sense the relationships among their various school experiences, their total experiences and their goals. This teacher will be responsible for developing with his pupils learning units in areas which have been identified as fundamental to American citizenship now and in the years immediately ahead. He will be responsible to plan and supervise curriculum experiences which take place in the commu-

nity. He will work with the pupil in clarifying his goals and will help each pupil plan his schedule. The basic teacher will then be in a position to supervise the self-evaluation of the pupil and make valid judgments concerning the degree to which the pupil is achieving up to the maximum of his ability.

5. With close home-school cooperation and with the basic teacher helping pupils to recognize why they are in high school and their increased opportunities and responsibilities for taking advantage of the resources of the school, the high school environment will have more of an atmosphere of learning. Teachers can then become more nearly directors of learning and less dispensers of prescribed courses in which pupils sometimes only satisfy mark and credit requirements.

6. The high school faculty, in addition to the basic teachers, will include specialists in the various subjects. Their classrooms will be laboratories equipped with appropriate aids for learning. The size of a class and the length of the period will be determined by the purpose to be achieved. The high school will utilize community resources whenever firsthand experience seems to offer greater promise for learning than simulated experience on the school campus.

---

*(Continued from page 485)*

down on would-be demonstrators. The demonstrations dissolved. The six-year-olds went back to school and Kasper went to jail. People explained to each other that what had happened was all the fault of that outsider from New Jersey.

In March 1958, the Jewish Community Center was dynamited by racists. The Nashville Community Relations Confer-

ence said, "we believe that the citizens of this community are all partly responsible . . . to the extent that we failed to support adequately with our time, our resources and our ideas the forces in our community working for harmony, justice, equality and dignity for all our citizens. This is the time . . . to join hands in a total community effort for better human relations."

As to the future, including Fall 1958, the gods give no guarantees.

Copyright © 1958 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.