

Curriculum News

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A New National Program

FOR SEVERAL years this column has served as a main channel for reporting curriculum news to its readers. As in other years, this column will continue to do this but will also report new developments in the Cooperative Action Program for Curriculum Improvement, "CAPCI." To provide a background for understanding news about CAPCI, this first issue reviews briefly what this new national ASCD program is and how it began.

Although officially the program came into being by action of the ASCD Board of Directors at the Seattle conference last March, extensive planning and work preceded that action. For example, the chairmen of the ASCD committees and commissions, meeting in Washington, D. C., in the autumn of 1956, contributed significantly with their recommendation that state and regional units assume increasingly heavy responsibilities in the total program of the national organization.

Again, deliberations of the St. Louis conference in 1957 demonstrated the urgency for more concerted effort in the support of field developments in curriculum. Throughout that year many individuals and groups, meeting in several sections of the country, undertook the task of shaping up the document adopted in Seattle as the broad outline of a program for action.

Program Content

What did that document propose? The heart of the proposal lies in a section titled "Content of the Program" which reads:

Although there are many significant curriculum problems confronting the schools of America, and others may develop within the foreseeable future, certain ones seem most pressing. It is expected that responsible groups within ASCD will make a final selection of problem areas to constitute the content of the program for the next few years. This final selection might be the three outlined below, or one or two of these, or of some different one or more problems, or of some combination of those below and different ones. The three problem areas suggested herein for consideration in determining the content of the program are:

1. Reaching toward a balanced curriculum
2. Providing for individual differences
3. Evaluation of learning.

The cooperative action program would be directed toward finding and implementing more generally satisfactory plans for dealing with the selected problem areas than those which have heretofore been utilized.

The contributions which ASCD is uniquely qualified to make in regard to such problem areas, and which should be focused and unified in this program, are as follows:

First, the organization has many on-

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Kindergartens**

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going activities—publications, conferences, and committee projects—which could be more closely tied to these problem areas, and used more systematically to define problems, present possible solutions, and focus the attention of its membership on these areas.

Second, the organization has long been interested in the encouragement of research and in the dissemination of research findings, and could take more decisive steps to uncover and publish such research data as are available and/or might become available.

Third, the organization is in strategic position to organize pilot studies and other field research. With an adequate staff for this purpose, the organization could sponsor a number of well-designed research studies to explore new solutions to educational problems.

The proposal then outlined, in a general way, the scope of each problem area and identified some of the major issues needing study in each.

To carry out this program three levels of operation were projected: (a) modification of existing activities without additional costs, (b) modification of existing activities with additional costs (to be met by the operating budget), (c) sponsorship of field research studies involving substantial costs. The Board of Directors and the Executive Committee, supported wholeheartedly by the membership at large, resolved to undertake the program at all three levels.

First Steps

Much has happened since Seattle! One of the first steps in moving ahead on Level 2, for example, was the meeting of ASCD state and regional presidents held in Washington, June 7-10. This meeting resulted in plans for bringing the activities of many state units into sharper focus with respect to the three problem

areas. Appointed also was a CAPCI Committee to advise the Executive Committee and the Washington staff on possible next steps to be taken at both levels 2 and 3. Members of this CAPCI committee are: William Alexander, Susan Crutchfield, Clarence Fielstra, Jane Franseth, Robert S. Gilchrist, Arthur J. Lewis, and this column editor.

From an initial meeting of this committee held in Cleveland July 5-7 came plans for (a) a national survey of curriculum practices schools are using to provide for individual differences, and (b) an investigation of resources available for the sponsorship of field research studies involving substantial costs.

With this as a background, future columns will report on further developments in CAPCI. Since the major efforts of this action program are centered in the work of individuals and groups at the state and regional levels, we need your help in keeping in direct touch with what is happening in your own school situation. And so, please let us hear from you—a note, a card, a clipping, a copy of a bulletin, a phone call. As these come in, we shall relate them to one another when such a relationship seems valid. We shall draw also on reports from the Washington staff as its members confer with state units and as they continue to be directly involved in the coordination of this new venture.

Available, too, are the more general news releases and reports on matters of interest in the field of curriculum. We shall select from among these and, within the limits of a column, shall try to relate their content to your interests.

—PAUL R. KLOHR, *assistant dean and coordinator of instructional program, College of Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus; and chairman of the CAPCI Committee of ASCD.*

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