

Curriculum News

Column Editor: Paul R. Klohr

CAPCI—An On-Going Program

THE ASCD national conference in Cincinnati last month illustrated in many ways how the Cooperative Action Program for Curriculum Improvement is giving added emphasis to certain major efforts of state units and to the work of committees and commissions within the organization. In so doing, CAPCI is verifying three hunches President William Alexander expressed in his editorial in the February issue of this journal—namely, that the number of persons actively involved in ASCD's activities will increase; that state, regional, and local units will develop varied projects directly related to the central purpose of curriculum improvement; and that commissions, committees, and staff members will develop improved methods of communicating with the membership and other groups.

No one looking in on the Wednesday morning clinics devoted to the state units at work could help but be impressed with the increasing vigor which characterizes the work of these organizations. The committee and commission meetings reflected the same spirit.

To cite but one illustration: the Commission on Core Teaching is at work on a project to determine the extent to which core programs are achieving some of the major values held to be important in modern education. Four questions are being asked: How effective are core programs (a) in developing skills, techniques, and attitudes involved in critical

thinking? (b) in helping students develop consistent value systems? (c) in developing skills and understandings for social living? and (d) in fostering the fullest development of students' personalities?

Members of the commission are collating existing research in each of the areas represented by these questions and are identifying the assumptions for core curriculum which underlie each. They will then involve selected schools directly in curriculum experimentation and will collect data to evaluate the results.

This effort of the Core Commission is laying fundamental groundwork for further developments in one of the large problem areas of CAPCI—evaluation of learning.

The CAPCI Committee, itself, in consultation with ASCD members has developed the outlines of major projects in the other two problem areas—providing for individual differences and reaching toward a balanced program. These documents are to be used not only to solicit support from sources outside of the organization, but also, to help state units and various committees and commissions relate their on-going work to a co-ordinated program for action when it makes sense to do so.

Project Proposals

Space here does not permit a full review of these two project proposals, but readers will be interested in seeing their

general nature. For example, the one which proposes a study of experimental procedures for individualizing instruction assumes that the need is more crucial than ever to center instruction in school on the individual in the group setting. It further assumes that *many approaches*, not one, are required for solution of the implied problems. An analysis of the returns from the questionnaire to ASCD members regarding procedures they are currently following to provide for greater individualization of the curriculum supports this assumption.

The proposal then develops the proposition that a promising solution to the problem lies in the school helping students learn how to teach themselves, or learning how to learn. The new ASCD yearbook, *Learning and the Teacher* underscores the soundness of this proposition.

To give concrete illustrations of four

places schools interested in participating in the study might take hold to develop their own curriculum solutions to the problem, the proposal suggests four categories of procedures: (a) the "saturated" learning environment, (b) guided exploration, (c) enrichment-acceleration and (d) flexible grouping.

The categories, by design, do not include ability grouping and acceleration. It is assumed that both of these, which are currently being given widespread consideration, involve mainly the manipulation of groups as contrasted with a clear concern for the individual. It is further assumed that the advantages and limitations of both approaches are rather widely understood and that major effort should now be given to the testing out of other promising approaches.

The second project is titled "A Proposal for Developing and Testing Criteria for a Balanced Curriculum." The

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major focus in this proposal is on curriculum improvement to achieve a balanced program.

As ASCD moves ahead with an action program in this problem area, the kinds of issues identified in the original proposal for CAPCI should begin to be resolved. Three such issues, readers may recall, are: (a) In what curriculum areas should all children and youth have experience? How much experience, in terms of years and percentage of time in school? (b) What curriculum areas should be considered as specialized education, for limited participation at some or all levels? On what criteria should the participation (or choice) in these areas be decided? (c) Can better balance in the curriculum be provided by such means as variable class size, different lengths of class periods and of the school day, television courses, summer school programs, and other administrative adaptations?

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Learning in Japan

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fifth and sixth grades, homemaking. In addition they have "extracurricular" activities in science, music, art, or sports (especially baseball). Similar subjects are required in the lower secondary schools; vocational subjects, homemaking and a foreign language are elective. Large numbers of students elect English.

Music, primarily western, and art are taught in *every* Japanese school. No one regards these areas as frills. The high value placed upon the arts may stem from a time honored philosophy which, according to Sano, "required the culti-

vation of an art of quiet but deep appreciation for all the good and the beautiful in the natural and human environment. . . . One's ability and talent, according to this view, were a trust from Heaven, to the development of which one must devote one's relentless efforts."⁷ At any rate, on holidays and Sundays, children of all ages can be seen outdoors drawing and painting. Lower and upper secondary school pupils, with scores in hand, flock to symphony concerts, ballets, and operas.

Teaching methods and curricular organizations are as varied as in this country. Unit study is common in correlated or fused programs, though many teachers encounter difficulties because of the large numbers of pupils in their classes. Audio-visual aids, both teacher- and pupil-made, as well as commercial aids, are used throughout the country. Many schools are now using TV as a resource for learning.

In the future, as in the past, the Japanese people will expect their schools to provide an educated citizenry. Modifications in the educational program will occur, as educators go on learning from their own and others' experiences. Change, however, will follow a complex pattern; for, as Sano notes:

. . . the Japanese will be induced to discard their historical heritage only when it is absolutely necessary for survival, for they are the people noted for setting store by anything that bears the mark of age. At the same time, they are not without an intense curiosity for the new. Their propensity for experimentation . . . has repeatedly saved their culture from stagnation in spite of their strong attachment to their past.⁸

⁷ Chiyeiko Sano. *Changing Values of the Japanese Family*. Dissertation. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1958.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

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