AS YOUR column editor reflects on this month’s theme, “Projects That Will Influence Instruction,” and attempts to select significant news items, he is again impressed with the urgent need for a clearer, more widely shared rationale for curriculum development and instruction. Without this, an intelligent reporting or a meaningful appraisal of the many things under way seems doubtful.

In early September the press in many parts of the nation reported items of this tenor: “A ferment of fresh ideas—on curriculum patterns, teaching methods, special classes, use of teachers and facilities—is bubbling in the nation’s classrooms as 40 million youngsters head back to school.” Then there would follow a listing of “new developments”—electronic teaching machines, teacher aides, foreign language classes for young children, intensified mathematics and science programs, advanced placement, teaching teams, extended school days, honors classes—to name a few.

In December, as one looks in on this “bubbling” and asks the teachers involved, “How is it going?” the response leaves him with the feeling that really very few know. The critical questions to be answered in the “new developments” often seem not to have been raised, and the goal-values sought seem not yet to have been formulated.

Should these activities be reported as significant experimentation? How shall one describe the underlying rationale? Through indiscriminate reporting, do we help to chart trends which schools will follow blindly in their attempts to modify programs under increasing pressure?

At the Cincinnati conference last spring, L. D. Haskew urged curriculum leaders to give careful and continuous attention to purposes, goals, values and direction lest action become an end in itself. His wise counsel is pertinent. We need more than ever new approaches to the analysis of curriculum problems, approaches which help to identify the major questions and issues underlying various alternatives for action. There comes to mind the insightful analysis Finley Carpenter made in the April 1959 issue of the University of Michigan School of Education Bulletin in his brief article, “Can the Argument About Pupil Grouping Be Resolved?” A second example of a different kind is the list of questions raised by the group studying the use of a language laboratory at the Passaic Valley Regional High School, Hillsdale, New Jersey. Louis Albini reports these in the June 1959 issue of the Secondary School Bulletin of the New Jersey State Department of Education.

This persistent need on the national curriculum scene again points to a major task for ASCD’s Cooperative Action Program for Curriculum Improvement.
The November 25-28 meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies included three assemblies geared to the topic, "Specific Changes Which Need To Be Made in the Social Studies Curriculum." Group meetings following these assemblies studied in detail the suggestions made. Howard H. Cummings, president of NCSS, identified one major problem which must be faced in efforts to reorganize the social studies curriculum when he said, "Although the social studies make up a major portion of the education of the average American before he goes to college, unlike science, mathematics, and modern language, it cannot look forward to heavy government subsidies and in the recent past has received no substantial foundation support."

The National Science Foundation plans to announce in March the colleges and universities which will offer in-service institutes during 1960-61 for secondary school science and mathematics teachers. Approximately 10,000 teachers in these fields will participate in such after-hours training. These institutes are designed primarily to assist colleges and universities to encourage teachers in local and outlying school districts to take advantage of scientific training facilities not otherwise available to them. Institute meetings will be held on evenings, Saturdays, or late afternoons so that teachers may attend while still teaching full time in their schools.

The Division of Curriculum and Instruction of the New Jersey Department of Education reports an example of cooperative effort on the part of elementary and secondary schools to improve curriculum through a pilot study in the Lower Camden County Regional District. Begun in 1957, this project is concerned with more effective methods of articulation in the region which has 2 six-year high schools and 22 elementary schools. A curriculum coordinator heads a Planning Committee made up of the county superintendent, principals of the elementary and secondary schools, helping teachers, and the regional superintendent. Among the significant activities undertaken are: the establishment of a textbook and materials center, the publication of a curriculum bulletin, teacher visitation programs, uniform cumulative records, and the development of a common K-12 philosophy of education.

Although those involved admit that their work is only a beginning, some outcomes of the project as expressed by participants are: "A recognition that the organization has served as a vehicle for aiding in the solution of common problems; that the project has improved articulation between elementary and secondary schools by giving administrators and teachers greater insight into the educational program from kindergarten through the twelfth grade; that the office of the curriculum coordinator, which serves as a coordinating element and clearinghouse, is extremely valuable."

A new color filmstrip, "Methods of Organizing Economic Activity," adaptable for high school social studies classes, demonstrates a significant approach to the development of curriculum resources. It is based on materials which grew out of an experimental economics class at the laboratory school of the University of Illinois. The high school students, themselves, took an active part in the preparation of the filmstrip, which is available with script and teaching suggestions from University High School, Urbana, Illinois.

Thomas R. Landry, director of elementary education in the Louisiana State Department of Education, reports a
study he has made of what supervisors and selected authorities think about supervision. Participating in the study were 110 Louisiana supervisors of instruction and 23 key persons in the field of supervision who responded to an opinion ballot of 48 items. Landry concludes that the Louisiana supervisors and the selected authorities are in close agreement on a majority of the items included in the poll. The two groups agreed, for example, that good supervisory practices include furnishing leadership in organizing study groups, helping the principal to supervise more effectively, keeping informed about research findings and making these findings and interpretations available, and recognizing the need for continuous planning, action, and evaluation.

This year marks the third and final phase of the ten-year campaign of the National Citizens Council for Better Schools to arouse interest in public education and to inform the public about its schools. The Council, organized in 1956, took over the work of the earlier National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools. According to Henry Toy, Jr., president, the national group will begin to serve more directly as a clearinghouse to supply printed materials for the use of state and local groups working for school improvement. To focus more fully on this task, some services such as the regional offices in Minneapolis, Denver, Louisville, and Brownsville, Texas, have been discontinued as has been the publication of the monthly "Better Schools." One feature of this shift in emphasis has been the preparation of a new pamphlet series, the first of which was "Yardsticks for Public Schools."

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