

Curriculum Developments

Column Editor: Curtis Paul Ramsey

Focus on Goals

The curriculum worker is constantly beset with demands for change in the instructional program. All too frequently the goals of the persons making demands are not in harmony with the carefully developed objectives of the school system. These established goals have a long historical perspective of development, and have been modified and shaped by emerging research evidence and accumulated cultural consensus. These goals have been developed through the cooperative endeavors of countless thousands of citizens and professional educators and, in the main, they have served well the needs of most children.

Several recently suggested curriculum innovations, however, indicate the presence of goals for our schools (in the minds of the innovation advocates) which are almost completely antithetical to those which educators and laymen previously have considered to be in the best interests of children. Furthermore, methods and materials suggested by these self-designated "educational authorities" frequently have implied a radical change in the basic values which have been imbedded in our culture. To many dedicated educators, subjected to hysterical public pressures stemming from the "Sputnik Syndrome," it seems that America is entering an era of neglect of the individual.

Evidences of this drift exist on every hand: some staff deployment and homogeneous grouping practices suggest that nameless, faceless entities are being moved about for production-line efficiency and space utilization considerations. Just where, in all this mad scrambling, is the unique individuality of the child considered? Who dares ignore and dismiss the great body of accumulated knowledge in the human relations sciences in their schemes for "efficiency"? Recently a factory in the Midwest was converted into a school. This is cheering news—all too frequently today, schools are being converted into "factories," and the teachers know it not.

Focus on Method

Many currently suggested innovations aim at greater "efficiency" in teaching, and massive projects and demonstrations have been instituted under the guise of "experiments," but they *are not experiments*. The better teachers are chosen (or volunteer) for the project; large amounts of money are spent to upgrade teacher competence within the project (but not for the "control" teachers); new materials and resources are made available for instruction within the "experimental" group; and, many times, schools are chosen carefully (not at random) to participate.

Out of all proportion to their actual

percentage, these "experimental" schools exist largely in upper socioeconomic neighborhoods, and thus achievement and intelligence levels (as measured by our current crude "intelligence" tests) are higher than in the "control" groups. Is it any wonder, then, that most curriculum innovation projects nearly always show that post-experimental achievement is higher in "experimental" groups than in the so-called "control" groups? The great wonder is that, with all this expanded (and very expensive) effort, the achievement levels of the "experimental" groups are not higher. Could it be that so much attention is focused on the novelty of the project that inadequate attention is paid to those psychological factors connected with effective learning on the part of children?

Focus on Evaluation

In an age of the SCIENTIFIC METHOD (capitalized because we have almost deified it), our experimental designs and procedures for curriculum modification and evaluation are not only woefully inadequate, but almost nonexistent. If this condition is true in those projects designed and conducted by dedicated and professional educators, how much more true these indictments are of those projects supported by some private interests. Critical evaluation is almost nonexistent in some of the major curriculum innovations supported privately today. Is anyone naive enough to expect that a multi-thousand (or multimillion) dollar project, launched to "prove" a curriculum contention, will produce anything but glowing reports and (almost) hysterical huckstering from those who support and conduct the project?

It is high time that the educational

profession define and publicize the differences between legitimate curriculum research, and demonstrations conceived to make manifest that some alternate teaching procedure is possible. To prove that these alternatives are possible does not prove that they are either more efficient, or better, or even more worthwhile than some other teaching procedures. Who will stand against the seductive support offered by some interests attempting to introduce curriculum change privately when the goals implied by such change have not been accepted by the general public as worthy objectives for our schools? Such advocates seem determined to short-circuit the normal and legitimately designated educational leaders and local boards of education.

New Curriculum Bulletins

San Francisco Unified School District.

Report of the Curriculum Strengthening Program. San Francisco: the School District, 1961. (Unpaged). Six volumes.

Growing out of one of the most impressive curriculum studies in recent years, this series of documents is the latest "chapter" in the "Conservative Revolution in California Education" story. Many supervisors and curriculum workers are familiar with the previous "chapters" in this extensive curriculum controversy:

The Curriculum Survey report¹

Superintendent Spears' preliminary reaction report²

¹ San Francisco Curriculum Survey Committee. *Report of the San Francisco Curriculum Survey Committee.* San Francisco: San Francisco Unified School District, 1960. 64 p.

² Harold Spears. *Preliminary Reactions to the Report of the San Francisco Curriculum Survey Committee.* San Francisco: San Francisco Unified School District, 1960. 48 p.

California Teachers Association's supporting document³

The Council for Basic Education's policy statement in reply⁴

The *Phi Delta Kappan's* special feature summarizing the conflict.⁵

The original survey report, conducted by eight university academicians, provided the impetus for a system-wide re-evaluation of educational goals, as well as an examination of content and school practices in San Francisco. (The Superintendent's Curriculum Strengthening Program began two years before the presentation of the University Survey report.)

This presently reviewed document reports a three-year study by teachers, supervisors and administrators. This comprehensive review of the curriculum, from kindergarten through grade 12, attempts to provide a set of "Basic Expectations" balanced with consideration for individual differences in ability, interest and talent.

As Superintendent Spears' introduction states, ". . . while this stabilization has been effected, the spirit that has been engendered among the teachers is not a lock-step procedure that would disregard the intellectual integrity of teacher and pupil. Rather, it is one of city-wide standards and expectations plus classroom and school distinctiveness that places each pupil in his own right as an individual who should get the satisfaction of working up to his maximum. This is true of teachers as well."

³ California Teachers Association Commission on Educational Policy, *et al. Judging and Improving Schools: Current Issues*. Bulletin No. 6. Burlingame, California: the Association, 1960. 16 p.

⁴ Mortimer Smith, editor. "The Lines Are Drawn in California." *Council for Basic Education Bulletin*, Vol. V, No. 3; 1960. p. 1-4.

⁵ Special Feature on the "Conservative Revolution in California Education." *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 42; No. 3; 1960. p. 89-112.

The program report (first volume) lists 23 major points for curriculum improvement, together with supporting documentation and guidelines. These points range from provision for lay readers to aid teachers of English, to plans for greater intellectual interchange between teacher and students, to giving greater intellectual challenge in primary grade reading materials.

The remaining five volumes (all in loose-leaf form) in the series comprise a basic set of course of study guides for San Francisco teachers as refined and reported by committees of their fellow teachers.

Other reports are anticipated from this program, as San Francisco teachers demonstrate their competence to improve and strengthen their curriculum and teaching processes without significant assistance from a group reporting "outside the field in which it has special competence."

—CURTIS P. RAMSEY, *Director, Learning Resources Center, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tenn.*

Teacher-Made Tests

(Continued from page 172)

2. Someone who is shy about meeting people, who prefers to work alone rather than with others
3. Someone who is snobbish and conceited, who feels superior to others in the class.

Similar items may involve choices of pupils for roles described as cooperative, industrious, dependable, friendly, and outstanding. Other items may ask for choices of roles described as poor loser, bookworm, and show-off.

The following statements provide a summary definition of the qualities by

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