A GLANCE at the front page of any metropolitan newspaper will create the impression that half of the biggest headlines today refer to events of significance in what were once considered remote corners of the world. Yet our curriculum planning and textbook writing have not kept up with this shift of world emphasis; the overwhelming percentage of our social studies programs are still dealing almost exclusively with the Western world.

It is becoming increasingly necessary that citizenship training include a background of information as a basis for intelligent judgments concerning problems which have their roots in alien cultures.

Related curriculum planning challenges our profession and is receiving increased attention on many fronts. It is gratifying, for example, to find that many of the "World History" texts now being published are attempting actually to live up to their title by including units on the non-Western world. Furthermore, some schools are feeling their way into this area. The required minimum of one semester's study of World Cultures instituted in the Pennsylvania public schools is indicative of this trend.

Pioneers in this endeavor, however, face many problems, such as: objectives; selection of content; distribution between historical, cultural, and current material; and sources.

At George School we have had an unusual opportunity to wrestle with these problems. A generous private grant afforded members of our history department extra time to develop a twelfth grade Afro-Asian Studies course, including materials, for secondary schools. The grant enabled us to review the existing literature and audio-visual aids so that we were able to make critical selections. Next, we edited the most suitable literature and charts, and compiled mimeographed volumes for classroom use.

Our first objective, over and beyond the general objectives of any social studies program, is to prepare the students to understand selected geographic areas as they exist today. This understanding involves more than a knowledge of the contemporary problems of these areas. It requires enough historical background to provide insight into the origin of the problems, as well as an appreciation of the area's culture, without which historical facts and economic statistics are meaningless.

Our second objective is to reduce the student's cultural egocentrism to the point where he can appreciate cultural, political and economic deviations from his own environment. We must enable our students to escape temporarily the clutch of their own culture so they may study the reasons for deviations open-
mindedly, rather than with a Sunday-
afternoon-at-the-zoo attitude. This is
necessary because our culture, as in all
cultures, has us convinced of its supe-
riority and has trained us to regard
anything which differs from it with
suspicion, derision or, at best, conde-
escending patronization. Objective study
of alien cultures does not imply rejection
of our own values, but rather under-
standing that institutions usually evolve
to meet the needs of the community.

A third vital objective is to introduce
certain basic concepts applicable to
underdeveloped lands in such a way that
they may be related to similar areas at
a future time. These will be explained.

The realization of our next two objec-
tives is dependent upon the first three,
because we want to show the relation-
ship of Afro-Asian problems to: United
States foreign policy, the Cold War,
and international organizations.

Lastly, we hope to stimulate students’
interest and develop their ability to
analyze new situations as they arise in
the non-Western world.

We feel that these objectives can best
be achieved through an intensive study
of a few areas. We selected China,
India, the Moslem world from Morocco
through Iran, and sub-Saharan Africa;
within the latter two, part of the study
is again based on representative coun-
tries. Our criteria for selecting these
were that they contain the cultural root
stock for peripheral areas and are focal
points in the world scene. We feel an
inherent weakness of expanded World
History courses or World Culture courses
is too wide a coverage, preventing a
study in depth.

We hope breadth is compensated for
by common denominator concepts, such as:
(a) the nature of a traditional
society, (b) the nature of the impact of
an industrialized society on a traditional
one and the trauma of transition, (c)
nationalism, and (d) problems of politi-
cal evolution and economic develop-
ment.

Each of these ideas is developed at
the appropriate spot in the first two
units, China and India, so that in sub-
sequent units, it is necessary only to
point up local variations to general
principles and then make comparisons
with other areas.

Our basic objective of creating a use-
ful, viable image of these areas as they
exist today conditioned our selection of
material for each unit. Approximately
one third of each unit is devoted to the
geographical, anthropological and cul-
tural background of the area. Here, in
line with our objective of reducing cul-
tural blindness, we try to show the
validity of the culture for the environ-
ment in which it evolved, and attempt
to see its “bizarre” aspects in the proper
perspective. Furthermore, we do not
feel that a great deal of emphasis on the
esoteric aspects of the culture is essential
for understanding the dynamics of a cul-
ture today; overemphasis of this is a
weakness of some current civilization
courses. This first third of the unit also
includes a chronological glimpse of pre-
European history to show that these peo-
ples had histories before Europeans came
to write them, and also to show the
historical reasons for their contemporary
institutions and attitudes.

The second part of each unit deals
with the impact of the West on the
people under consideration, their result-
ing transitional development and emer-
gence under the spur of nationalism.

The last third of the unit includes the
period from independence to the present
with emphasis on problems facing new
nations.
More traditional courses often concentrate on culture and history, but do not come to honest grips with the more controversial present. We feel each enriches the knowledge of the other two, and is in turn incomplete without them.

The structure of the material within the units is basically historical, with the geographic, cultural and contemporary material presented topically at the appropriate place. Structural similarity of units facilitates comparisons and contrasts between areas and the carry-through of the basic concepts from unit to unit.

Methods

Hopefully we have developed an intensive, highly organized course with a maximum of penetration and a minimum of lost motion. This end is enhanced with the selected mimeographed readings with introductions and guide questions designed to accompany any good basic text such as the paperbacks which we use. The sources of the readings are varied: newspapers, government documents, literature, speeches and writings of political figures, and readable books on specialized major topics.

There are four categories of readings according to the use we make of them. First, there is factual material not adequately covered in the text, usually related to one of the basic concepts which we want to stress. Second are the analyses of situations and, where possible, two conflicting analyses of controversial subjects are presented for critical comparison by the student. Third is primary documentary material. Fourth is background literature, such as The Good Earth, to give a student the "feel" of a culture or an historical movement.

Thus, we have gathered reference material from which the student can develop a critical understanding of the subject. We consider development of critical thinking skills and habits to be a prime responsibility of the social studies. Thus we have in this case sacrificed library research skills stressed by advocates of group study methods. In using these methods, students, too often from a poorly constructed general background, are sent to do inadequately directed research in a sparsely stocked library. Thence they return and unload on their classmates a hash of relevant and irrelevant facts, largely undigested, which the teacher may not be able to edit and make meaningful. Whether used for pedagogical reasons or to compensate for a teacher's inadequate subject matter preparation, this method is often unproductive.

Students should, instead, be able to analyze documents, look for the bias in partisan statements, make specific or general comparisons, and project hypotheses from known facts and a given trend. After students have developed their content and conceptual knowledge, they will be given an opportunity to study independently an area new to them.

Evaluation and Prospects

The results from half a year of teaching Afro-Asian Studies to students of varied ability have been gratifying. We are particularly pleased with the motivation of the students. The course has meaning in terms of world developments of which the students are conscious, and the challenging nature of the readings has also served to stimulate creative thinking. Furthermore, we are satisfied that our major ideas and concepts are (Continued on page 522)
4. Pupils and teachers are together for continuous periods of time greater than a single period.

More uninterrupted time allows for greater flexibility and variety in learning activities.

Greater continuity in learning experiences is possible since units or topics may be explored with less regard to fixed time allotments and period changes.

Better opportunities are available for pupil-teacher planning and evaluation. There is easier scheduling of field trips and the use of resources outside the classroom.

Flexibility in program permits teachers to choose educational topics of value to early adolescents whether or not they “fit” the particular “subject area.”

In summary, the evidence here presented places responsibility for a successful block-time, unified studies or core program squarely upon the shoulders of educational leaders, especially the local school administrator.

The many benefits of block-time and core are realized only when administrators and other leaders practice sound principles of democratic leadership in initiating, developing and sustaining the program. Preservice and in-service courses should give added stress to these essential skills. Greater attention to these qualifications should be given when administrators and other top staff personnel are selected. Numerous successful block-time and core programs attest to the fine leadership being provided in many school systems. However, survey results indicate that there is much room for improvement.

Afro-Asian

(Continued from page 503)

being understood, remembered and applied in a meaningful way to different situations.

Naturally, we are not satisfied with all phases of the course as it stands. Course content and readings will be revised after classroom trial. Detail in some sections of the course has obscured rather than clarified major points. Objective tests, study aids, teacher aids, and an annotated bibliography of literature and audio-visual aids have yet to be completed.

Because the curriculum described here seems broadly applicable to secondary schools, our grant stipulates that we should produce materials available for other schools’ experimental use. We anticipate sharing these materials with others next year. The Afro-Asian Studies project will benefit from the resulting evaluation.

We believe that teachers with comprehensive social studies backgrounds can handle a course such as this with some special preparation and adequate teaching materials. Careful study of a good college text on each area, reading on general concepts, and/or a summer institute, will provide reasonable preparation. Carefully delineated unit outlines, as contrasted with all-inclusive “teaching units,” can give teachers a needed sense of security. Challenging readings for students provide a basis for meaningful discussion which relieves the teacher from struggling to breathe life into a subject enervated by an insipid text. Similar objectives, however, are perhaps also obtainable through judicious use of carefully selected paperbacks, periodicals and other materials.