

Curriculum Developments

Column Editor: Melvin W. Barnes

Evaluation and Testing

Two Years Ago

A glance back through the files of *Educational Leadership* reveals that the issue of October 1960, carried the following:

Editor's Note: A new column, "Curriculum Developments," here makes its debut. The ASCD Executive Committee has given it a tough assignment. The column is "to report new developments in curriculum news, bulletins and research."

In fulfilling this triple aim, the Column Editor will need much help from his readers. He urges you to send him news items he should note; curriculum materials for possible review; and information on research studies that should be reflected in his column.

The column begins its third year by renewing the invitation to its readers to contribute newsworthy items. Please do. It is proposed that the column reinforce as far as possible the issue theme for the month as it reports research, reviews, and relevant issues.

SMMSG Does No Harm

The first returns from evaluative studies of the reformed curricula in secondary schools are trickling in. Testing projects to appraise SMMSG mathematics, BSCS biology, PSSC physics, CBA chemistry, and others are under way.

Paul Rosenbloom, Director of the Minnesota National Laboratory, is quoted in Newsletter No. 10 of the School Mathematics Study Group as saying, "SMMSG doesn't seem to do any harm to students, and may be good for some of them." An evaluation of the SMMSG curriculum in grades 7 through 12 showed that despite SMMSG's reduced attention to traditional mathematical skills there was no appreciable loss in learning of those skills. Moreover, SMMSG instruction resulted in "pronounced and consistent extensions of developed mathematical ability" as compared with the conventional teaching of mathematics. A third phase of the investigation showed that students of widely varied ability are capable of learning SMMSG materials. Scores at all ability levels were widely scattered. This led to the conclusion that the traditional means of selecting students for ability grouping in mathematics is questionable.

A five-year study of SMMSG instruction is under way which should shed important light on the questions that should be answered before sound curricular change in mathematics can be planned. In the meantime, there seems no reason to worry about what may be lost as we forsake traditional ways of teaching mathematics.

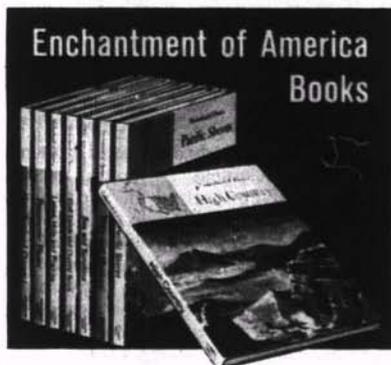
Measuring Creativity

The *Review of Educational Research*, in another special issue covering developments on the testing front (February 1962), departed from regular format by adding a chapter dealing with creativity. The authors remark that current ventures getting under way to measure creative giftedness are avoiding the errors of the early research in intelligence. Research in the field has tended to center on exploration and understanding of the nature of creativity, with a wholesome disinclination to rush into the manufacture of tests for the market.

A few commonplace observations are worth noting. First, school grades are poor predictors of creativity. (One wonders: if five years hence creativity should come to enjoy the vogue that intelligence does today, is it likely that teaching could change so markedly that school grades would correlate highly with creative performance?) Second, the hoarding of knowledge does not lead to creative behavior. Third, traditional intelligence tests enlist little creative endeavor. Fourth, academic marks are little related to on-the-job performance of research workers. Fifth, when research scientists name the intellectual characteristics that are most important to success, they mention mainly mental features not found in intelligence tests, such as, for example, independence.

One research scientist of my acquaintance says it has taken him "ten years to get over his education." He is seeking to create more highly heat-resistant skins for space craft. His schooling, including university and doctoral study in a famous technical institute, so stiffened his mental muscles that retraining in the art of inquiry was necessary for the tasks of the research laboratory.

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Students who make the best grades sometimes turn out to be imitative rather than imaginative. A few years ago a noted university graduated a student who was so academically perfect that the institution created a special super grade for him. He has not been heard from since, and his professors are said to have concluded that he was merely the world's best student.

Where Is Testing Taking Us?

Testing, Testing, Testing, the booklet published by AASA, NASSP, and the Chief State School Officers, went out to more than 40,000 school administrators. The *New York Times* headline called it "A nationwide revolt by school systems against the 'excessive testing' of prospective college students." More than twenty national testing programs are now in operation, not to mention the state-wide programs such as the Regents examina-

tions in New York. One question asked by the committee responsible for the booklet was, "Is it reasonable that a test should be taken by 800,000 pupils (consuming the equivalent of nearly 400,000 pupil school days) to determine 10,000 finalists who will compete to determine 1,000 winners?"

Advanced Placement

In what order did the following invade Europe? Huns, Magyars, Mongols, Ottoman Turks? Answer: In that order.

This is a question in the advanced placement examination in European History. Essay-type questions, however, are more common than multiple choice on these examinations.

Advanced placement originated in 1951. In 1956, 1229 students took the College Board tests for advanced placement. Last May, 16,300 high school seniors took these tests, making passing

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scores on 85 percent of the tests. In 1956, 104 schools offered the program, whereas last year 1,350 did. During the same period the number of colleges that permit students to skip courses grew from 130 to over 600.

Despite this dramatic growth, advanced placement programs are reaching less than 1 percent of the total number of high school students who graduate each year. And less than 5 percent of the nation's public and private high schools are included. Approximately half of the country's four-year colleges participate.

Last year Harvard had the largest percentage of advanced placement students—452 out of 1,150 entering freshmen. Studies at Harvard show the students who skip courses or are granted sophomore standing do as well academically as other students.

The College Board is contemplating extension of the tests to include economics, political science, philosophy, Greek, and other subjects.

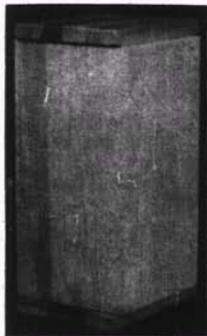
—MELVIN W. BARNES, *Superintendent of Schools, Portland, Oregon.*

Editorial

(Continued from page 89)

creased so that teachers can expect less rather than more supervisory help on jobs which are growing in complexity. It appears unlikely that this trend will be reversed or even slowed in the years immediately ahead. An increasing number of new teachers will have less face-to-face supervision by principals and supervisors than they have had in the past.

Two or three possibilities seem to have promise in this regard. One is to utilize available supervisory personnel in new ways—more nearly as instructors in in-service classes of teachers than in individual visitation and conferencing. A second is to extend the educational



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training period of new teachers into their first years on the job with teacher preparation institutions taking greater responsibility for continuing supervision and additional training. A third possibility is that of utilizing experienced teachers as helping teachers or in supervisory roles with their less experienced colleagues. None of these ideas is new but it would appear that the demands of the immediate future will call for their utilization on a scale not yet attempted. Each of the possibilities suggests a continuing education role for teachers as learners and as teachers of less experienced colleagues.

Clearly from many points of view the education of teachers is a continuing task. New avenues of cooperation are needed between and among college personnel responsible for general education, academic specialization, and professional

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