DRAMATIC changes are taking place in public school instruction, and the tempo of change is increasing. Recognizing this, the Portland Public Schools, assisted by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, are developing an in-service education program to serve as a prototype for other public school systems. A principal ingredient in this program is the employment of carefully selected classroom teachers to plan and teach in-service courses for continuing growth. This account describes an effort to engage a large number of classroom teachers in defining instructional objectives and constructing courses and workshops based on these objectives.

Course Development

The project director worked with most committees during the school year to prepare them for course development work. During the three-week summer session in which most work was done, however, he relied primarily on supervisors and principals to give help to teachers preparing course outlines. Within each committee one or two teachers were assigned to each course to develop objectives and learning experiences.

Within a week after committees began struggling with objectives, several problems appeared. In general these were problems of attitude toward objectives, confusion about specificity, lack of concise and lucid language, overuse of objectives, and confusion as to whether objectives should relate to the teacher or to the learner. Each of these problems will be discussed briefly.

Problems of Attitude

Members of committees did not resist the idea of building courses around objectives. Yet it was evident that most members did not understand how objectives should function in course development. The use of objectives was regarded by many as a tiresome nod to professional curriculum builders. This attitude may well be the result of long exposure to objectives in curriculum publications so
impotent that they create an impression that objectives are more a matter of form than of substance in curriculum building.

**Problems of Organization**

The difficulties teachers had in using instructional objectives appeared to be as much a fault of curriculum construction theory as of teachers' inability to apply that theory. This theory has not placed in the hands of the teacher a workable way to build a course of instruction that provides for simultaneous development of skills, habits and attitudes while retaining structure and unity.

To surmount these difficulties, a form was developed for use by the committees which calls for two kinds of objectives, *organizing* and *concomitant*. Organizing objectives, taken together, reveal the main focus of the course and provide it a logical consistency from the instructor's point of view. As each organizing objective is developed through the selection of appropriate learning experiences, the course developer finds opportunities to develop *concomitant* learnings, often as important as the learnings being sought in relation to the organizing objective.

The form used, together with an illustration of an organizing objective and a concomitant learning, is shown below. This organizing objective is one of several in a mental health course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizing Objective</th>
<th>Suggested Learning Activities</th>
<th>Concomitant Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To help students become familiar with the kinds of personal help available to them in the school and community.</td>
<td>Have a minister, physician, and school counselor talk to the class about the kinds of help they can give and the kinds of problems brought to them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase confidence in approaching appropriate persons or agencies for specific kinds of information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The form referred to here made it possible to work with many kinds of objectives while retaining a logical course structure, and relatively uninstructed teachers were able to use the form with some success.

**Literary Form**

Among the problems of literary form encountered, lack of parallelism was most common. Also, clarity of expression and selection of words to convey exact meaning needed constant attention. The wording of an objective can do much to give it life. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uninspiring</th>
<th>Better</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To help students understand that organisms utilize other materials to maintain bodily processes.</td>
<td>To help students understand that living organisms depend on matter outside themselves to exist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words like *utilize*, *materials*, and *maintain* are overworked, and when combined in a single sentence deprive it of meaning and vitality.
Level of Specificity

How specific should an objective be? Teachers had great difficulty with this question, and it was necessary repeatedly to work for conciseness and clarity. To illustrate, two objectives are listed here:

Vague
To help teachers learn how to develop a functional classroom.

Specific
To help teachers learn procedures for grouping students for mathematics skills instruction.

Teachers who stated objectives specifically moved much more quickly, purposefully and effectively in their quest for teaching activities than did those who stated objectives in general terms. It is often necessary to begin with a broadly stated goal, then to subdivide it into specific components before selecting learning experiences. For example:

To help students understand that electrical energy can be converted into other forms of energy.

- Electrical energy can be converted into light (appropriate activities)
- Electrical energy can be converted into heat (appropriate activities)
- Electrical energy can be converted into mechanical energy (appropriate activities).

Perhaps no other aspect of curriculum construction is at once so simple and so difficult as the reduction of a general objective to a level where it tells the teacher in unequivocal terms how to organize his teaching.

Overuse of Objectives

In listing concomitant learnings, teachers showed a tendency to think of all conceivable values that might result from a learning activity and to list them all. They were told to list only those values for which specific teaching provision had been made; that "concomitant" in no way was to be confused with "incidental."

Indiscriminate listing of concomitant objectives reflects complete misunderstanding of their role, for it treats such objectives as by-products rather than as determiners of the teaching process.

Teacher Objectives vs. Student Objectives

In developing in-service courses, some teachers wrote instructions to themselves which they termed "teacher objectives." A "teacher behavior" was regarded as a legitimate objective just as a "student behavior" is. On analysis, such teacher objectives are revealed to be statements of activity, not purpose. An example might be:

To review the use of alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia in poetry.
Such statements tell us nothing of the reason for teaching these elements of literary style. If there is a purpose for teaching them, it should be stated, as for example:

To help students understand how alliteration may be used to intensify the imagery of a poetic passage through the medium of sound.

Some teachers chose to develop their courses as if they were designed for students rather than teachers, eliminating confusion over “teacher objectives” and “student objectives.”

**Use of Taxonomy**

Some exploration was made to see whether material in the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* could play a supporting role in the work of course development committees.

In the *Taxonomy*, cognitive and affective processes of learning are represented as goals of education, as indeed they are and should be. Yet most classroom teachers have had insufficient experience with these process goals to use them in organizing teaching. As teachers and supervisors develop greater familiarity with the *Taxonomy*, this approach may find more favor and use among them.

The science courses developed did stress processes as concomitant objectives (e.g., “ability to state an hypothesis, to generalize accurately from data, to analyze data”), but the terminology used was that which is familiar to science teachers rather than that used in the *Taxonomy*.

This discussion may suggest that using outstanding classroom teachers to develop in-service courses is a frustrating and unprofitable procedure. This is not true. The positive rewards were in fact very great. Teachers approached their work with high morale, and there were clearly observable benefits to their professional knowledge. Several teachers remarked that this experience with objectives brought new perspective and meaning to their teaching.

The stress laid on objectives in course development also paved the way for an evaluation program which is being carried out over a two-year period with the assistance of Educational Testing Service. By analyzing and acknowledging our problems as we proceed, we hope to give the new in-service program built-in powers of regeneration.

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