

● Innovations in Education

Developing an Instructional Materials Center in the Mount Royal School

WALTER W. WILLIAMSON

CAN a multi-media approach to instruction make learning more of an adventure to the child? It has done so at the Mount Royal Elementary School in the inner city, Baltimore, Maryland, where the library is a demonstration center for the Knapp School Libraries Project.

"This has been a rich experience for my class and for myself," said a teacher when asked to describe the difference the project has made. "I believe the children changed their thinking about a library greatly. They now feel this is a place for information and pleasure—not just a place where books are kept."

Another said, "My children of short attention span learn and retain more through audio-visual aids. The phonics records and filmstrips have been most helpful."

"The new materials are a source of inspiration and practical help. A welcome change of presentation to the child," chimed in a third.

"I thoroughly appreciate the many services that the Knapp Project has offered thus far," commented another

teacher. "The different kinds of materials provided aid the teacher in keeping an interesting and varied program of learning in the classroom. Through the use of these audio-visual aids, the children seem to have a greater opportunity to become directly involved in the actual lesson."

Before the Knapp grant was received, the Mt. Royal School library contained 3,500 books and 48 filmstrips for a school population of 750 children. No other print, nonprint or audio-visual materials of any type circulated.

A survey of the faculty showed that most teachers never used much audio-visual equipment. Although extensive equipment was available from a city-wide instructional materials center, the necessity of ordering in advance seemed to discourage its use.

Total equipment available in the Mt. Royal School for twenty-six teachers consisted of two motion picture projectors, one tape recorder, three filmstrip projectors, one opaque projector, and several small record players, but none with a jack outlet for listening.

Expanding Resources

After becoming an instructional materials center, however, the Mt. Royal library rapidly expanded all its resources. First, audio-visual equipment was acquired through the Knapp Project funds for exclusive library use. It included standard rear-view and individual filmstrip projectors, an overhead projector, a record player with a jack outlet, a tape recorder, three sets of listening posts and earphones, an 8mm loop cartridge motion picture projector, a transparency maker, and a dry mount press.

Similar equipment was obtained for classroom use; it was kept in a central storage room and distributed to classrooms by the custodians whenever teachers requested it.

The field worker from Towson State College organized after-school workshops for the members of the faculty to acquaint them with the machines and instruct them in their use. These all-school workshops were followed by small group sessions. Afterward, individual work periods were arranged for those teachers desiring additional instruction. In some instances, teachers requested help when they began using the new equipment in the classroom.

Librarians selected material to be used with the additional equipment. Filmstrips were obtained which dealt with major areas of the curriculum. As these began to arrive in numbers, they were displayed after school for a week and previewed by the teachers, who were encouraged to look at them in their spare time.

A prerecorded tape collection was started. Programs were obtained from



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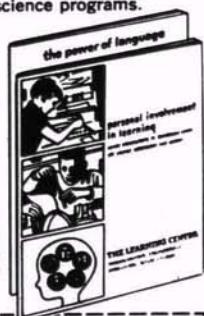
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tape libraries sponsored by the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota, the Oregon State Department of Education, the NEA Tape Repository and World Tapes for Education. Most of the 220 taped programs received were originally broadcast over educational networks and then made available to schools at no charge except for a small copying fee. These included dramatizations of stories such as *Goldilocks*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Charlotte's Web*, and *Homer Price*, biographical dramatizations from the lives of Abraham Lincoln, George Washington Carver, Thomas Edison, Marian Anderson, Christopher Columbus, and Florence Nightingale, and field trips through a steel mill, a logging camp, and a large city. The tapes are as popular with teachers and librarians as they are with the children. They are used extensively both in the library and in the classroom, frequently with listening posts.

A phonograph record collection was compiled using a well-known series of historical biographical records and many others recommended by the National Council of Teachers of English. Stories by John Ciardi, Maurice Evans, Boris Karloff, and Carol Channing seemed to delight all age groups. A commercially produced series of recorded phonics lessons was also added to the collection.

Because of the expense, it was decided not to purchase commercial transparencies for the overhead projector. Instead, children were encouraged to make their own, using secondhand x-ray film available at a few cents a sheet. Several sets of drawings and diagrams for use with machine-made transparencies were ordered from a leading manu-

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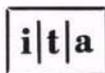
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facturer. One of the librarians made transparencies from these for the file.

Half a dozen 8mm loop cartridge films were purchased for experimental purposes, but it was soon agreed that even better films of this type could be made in the Mt. Royal School and the nearby community. Since the school is in an urban renewal area, many unusual opportunities exist for making educational films. Plans were made to develop films using these resources.

A vertical file collection was soon built up using as one resource the available catalogs of free and inexpensive materials at Towson State College. The field worker sent more than 1,000 letters to business organizations throughout the United States and abroad. The response to this request was so great that two filing cabinets were soon filled with materials.

Business groups also sent posters and charts, and within a few months a large collection of more than one hundred items was available to librarians and teachers.

A picture collection was assembled in the library. Some pictures were obtained free of charge, while several series of large picture sets were purchased from leading companies. The dry-mount press was used to mount those pictures which could be damaged by extensive use.

A map collection, consisting primarily of road maps, was also started. This grew as the librarians and teachers in the Mt. Royal School took trips and then donated their maps to the library.

The dramatic build-up of materials apparently stimulated fresh interest in audio-visual aids. In a survey made at the end of the project's first year, a

majority of teachers in the Mt. Royal School stated in a questionnaire that more filmstrip and motion picture projectors, record players and tape recorders were needed for classroom use. Not only was additional equipment desired, but the teachers were nearly unanimous in requesting extra material for use with these aids, such as filmstrips, pictures, teaching records, slides, prerecorded tapes, and transparencies.

Additional materials, both auditory and visual, were requested in primary and intermediate literature, biography, poetry, science, music, and arithmetic.

During the following year, these resources were added to the library collection. For the most part, Mt. Royal teachers have made extensive use of the new equipment and materials in the school. Surveys indicate that the use of some of the equipment has increased by more than five hundred percent within a short period of time, often less than half a year.

Most schools, especially ones in the inner city, could benefit by a program similar to the Knapp Project, in which the emphasis is on curriculum enrichment through the use of a wide variety of materials.

A multi-media approach does make learning an exciting adventure and stimulates thinking by opening many new avenues to obtain information. The program at the Mt. Royal School, through the impetus provided by the Knapp School Libraries Project, has made an impact on education.

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