



## A Tri-County Social Studies Project

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**I**N MARYLAND, south of the District of Columbia, are three small, predominantly rural counties. As in many similar parts of the nation, school budgets are "tight" in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties. Their able administrative and supervisory staffs strive to get top value from each dollar. This fact is illustrated in the cooperation among the three counties in in-service education programs for teachers. One such cooperative program is now well under way to upgrade social studies instruction, kindergarten through grade twelve.

During the period 1964-66, a Tri-County committee was organized, made up of teachers, principals, and supervisors, with St. Mary's County Assistant Superintendent James H. Ogden as chairman. This group developed the two bulletins which were to be the basis for an updated social studies curriculum. This was Phase I of the project. Authorities in social studies education were brought in as consultants. Maryland State Social Studies Supervisor James H. Wirth aided in this and later phases of the project.

The first bulletin developed was "Guidelines for a Proposed Program in Social Studies." This material outlined basic generalizations, themes, and "variants" for the social studies curriculum, K-12. This is the framework for the social studies. The second bul-

letin was "Social Studies Skills: A Guide to Identification and Sequential Development." This material outlined the skills which should be taught in the social studies curriculum, with particular reference to grade placement for introduction of those skills and for continued skill development and reinforcement.

### **An Inclusive Approach**

The focus of this report is on Phase II of the project, during which the three counties have worked together to implement the new program, to help teachers to utilize the guide and the skills bulletins, and to improve social studies experiences for children in Tri-County classrooms.

With funds provided by the Tri-County Regional Education Laboratory, funded under Title III, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a three-week workshop was conducted under the direction of the writer during the summer of 1967. Participants, who were paid stipends, included classroom teachers from all grade levels in each county as well as administrators and supervisors. The purpose of the workshop was to develop illustrative resource units and/or teaching strategies for each grade level, using the guide and the skills bulletins as a basis.

Some of the topics of units which were

developed reflect recent changes which have occurred nationally in the social studies. For example, the first-grade group developed a unit on "The First Family." This multidisciplinary unit emphasizes political science, various aspects of the American heritage, and, to some extent, sociology. It capitalizes on proximity to the nation's capital and on the abundant daily coverage of the first family in Washington newspapers.

The topic dealt with at the third-grade level was "Laws Protect People's Rights." This unit emphasizes the utilization of local resource people as eight-year-olds explore the reasons underlying, and benefits to society of, health laws, fishing and hunting regulations, traffic laws, and laws governing local schools.

The sixth-grade group developed a unit on the Andean nations of South America. The high school teachers of American history in the seventh and eleventh grades worked on a thematic approach, as compared with the traditional chronological approach to the subject. At all levels, emphasis was placed on indicating to the teachers who would use the units the resources which are readily available locally, or easily obtainable. It was also emphasized that the units which were developed were illustrative; that the guide was sufficiently flexible to allow for diverse approaches to the basic generalizations.

## **A Flexible Schedule**

An attempt was made to "pace" the workshop advantageously. Speakers were brought in to deal with such special topics as evaluation and principles of child development. At intervals, films and filmstrips were available for viewing. Publishers and producers of other social studies materials arranged exhibits of their work periodically. They had been apprised beforehand of the topics being dealt with.

A flexible daily schedule had been prepared before the start of the workshop. This indicated speakers and exhibits, and attempted to "calendar" various aspects of the tasks at hand. The teachers felt that the schedule helped ensure production.

At the conclusion of the three weeks, each group had material edited and ready for final typing and duplicating, chores which were divided among the secretarial staffs of the counties. It was emphasized that participants would be a key factor in implementing the material in their counties. They were urged to use the material early in the 1967-68 term and to work with their principals in faculty meetings to share experiences and ideas from the summer workshop. The "seed" concept was being utilized.

The evaluation at the conclusion of the workshop indicated that one of its greatest values was the opportunity for elementary and secondary teachers to work together in curriculum development.

In early fall 1967, the products of the summer workshop were disseminated to the teachers of the three counties. In late fall and winter, the writer conducted four-day follow-up workshops in each county. The purpose of these "mini-workshops" was to help selected teachers, who were relieved of classroom responsibilities, to make plans and gather resource materials to teach the units developed during the summer. Summer participants were included in these workshops.

The main emphasis of the mini-workshops was on creating the physical environment to teach the units. Participants spent much time outside of the workshop gathering teaching materials and aids. The director illustrated the utilization of materials and the teaching of skills through teaching demonstrations with children as subjects. On the last day of each workshop, each participant arranged an exhibit of the materials he planned to use to teach the unit. Again, as in the summer workshop, participants were urged to help other teachers to utilize the units. Principals and supervisors later aided immeasurably in helping the workshop participants to work with other teachers.

Evaluation by local school personnel of the extent to which the guide and the skills bulletins, and the summer workshop materials, were being utilized by teachers led to a second summer workshop during the summer of 1968. Richard T. Farrell, Professor of Secondary Education and History, joined the

writer as co-director of the workshop. Some teachers from the earlier workshops again participated. The format was generally the same as that of 1967, though the 1968 workshop was slightly shorter in duration. Staffs from the three counties believed that the materials produced were better than the earlier product, no doubt due to a deeper experiential background.

Follow-up workshops were again held in the three counties during the 1968-69 term to implement units developed during the summer. The number of volunteers for workshop participation has steadily increased. Present plans provide for additional Tri-County Social Studies workshops.

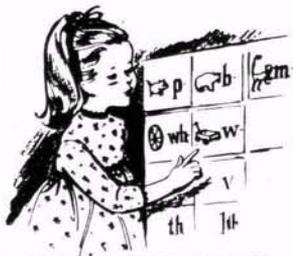
What are the benefits of the kind of in-service program described? First, from a purely practical standpoint, the cooperation among three neighboring school districts is sensible. By pooling internal and external resources, the teachers of the three southern Maryland counties have benefited through a better in-service training program. Second

are the benefits to curriculum when teachers of all grade levels work together to develop a program. Tri-County teachers have practiced what is preached about K-12 curriculum development. Third, a plan such as this one involves an ever-increasing number of teachers in program development while using small group workshop situations. New "seeds" are continually being scattered.

Finally, teachers see in practice the continuity of curriculum development. They see the follow-through and the modifications which help to keep a curriculum vital, timely, and relevant. One of the most heartening experiences with the Tri-County teachers has been to hear criticism of some of the work done nearly two years ago—criticism by those who did the work. Those critics have indeed learned that work in curriculum is never finished!

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