THE Commission on MIT Education, composed of eight faculty members and four students, calls for sweeping curricular reforms in its 234-page interim report, Creative Renewal in a Time of Crisis. In the first two chapters of the report, the committee criticizes the neglect of general education over the years as a result of the trend toward specialization and the accompanying fragmentation of knowledge.

Students come to the university young and skeptical, but brimming with idealism and enthusiasm. . . . Ready to shed their parochial prejudices, they discover that the ideal of the "community of scholars" is undermined by the tangle of specializations, esoteric languages, and fragmentary approaches to learning which turns the university into a series of self-protected enclaves. . . . they find that scholars in the separate fields and schools have little to say to each other and rarely if ever come together, as the name "university" might imply they should, to focus their collective skill and wisdom on the urgent dilemmas of the human condition.

. . . general education has been relegated to a secondary role . . . as undergraduate programs have, in effect, become pre-graduate training. The same pressures have reached down into the secondary schools where, in a real sense, preparation for graduate training now begins.

. . . If we intend to seek the excellent and unique in undergraduate education, then the excellence must begin in the first years; and the supermarket—or the warehouse—is not a model for it.

. . . What is needed goes beyond the kind of mechanical curricular tinkering we in the universities have called educational reform, which has so far failed and will continue to fail unless deeper changes—in the whole ethos of the university—begin to occur.

It is of utmost importance that the universities of this country move rapidly to address the problem of general education. . . .

The report goes on to note that the formula for dealing with new knowledge through curricular specialization and compression has contributed to the curricular crisis, and recommends that "in an age of specialization, those responsible for undergraduate education must pay greater attention than ever to the integration of knowledge from various disciplines and the relation of that knowledge to human action and experience."

In emphasizing that general education be regarded as the responsibility of the entire faculty, the report calls for the establishment of a first division charged with the development and administration of a well articulated and coherent interdisciplinary program of
general education with broadly-based faculty participation. The report reviews a number of possible experimental patterns, including a program "focusing on the social consequences of science and technology or on problems of the environment, in which members of the economics and political science faculty would participate, along with natural scientists and engineers," while another program might aim at other kinds of "synthesis involving the collaboration of scientists and humanists."

A final report of the Commission is scheduled to be released during the 1971-72 academic year. The Commission on MIT Education is headed by Professor Kenneth Hoffman, a mathematician. Although the interim report was designed for internal discussion at MIT, it has attracted considerable attention among educators nationally.

Elementary Level Typewriting Classes

All fifth and sixth graders at Roberts School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, take typing three class periods a week. The purposes of the program are to determine if, at the age of ten, children have the physical coordination to typewrite and to learn to what extent typewriting will aid pupils in reading, vocabulary development, spelling, and punctuation.

Says Mrs. Faith McDonald, who instructs the classes: "The students' enthusiasm for typing has been remarkable. The children have quickly acquired the basic manual skills and have placed stringent demands upon themselves not to make errors. The course emphasis is on accuracy rather than speed and, as a result, the students work in an ideal noncompetitive learning environment."

The cost of implementing the pilot program, including 30 typewriters and classroom renovation, totaled $8,566 (excluding the instructor's salary).

Drug Discussions

Cambridge high school students are being involved in a series of drug abuse "rap sessions" with Massachusetts College of Pharmacy students. The small group discussions are part of the Cambridge Schools' high school drug education program. The M.C.P. students are in their fourth or fifth year of studies, and all have completed a basic course in drug abuse problems.

The meetings supplement a drug education curriculum that begins in the primary grades with a discussion of poisons and continues through grade nine under the topic of "Drugs, Use and Abuse."

Evening School Preferences

Although Cambridge, Massachusetts, is known as a city of academicians, its citizens may actually have a greater interest in mechanical than liberal arts—a conclusion indicated by evening school enrollments. The Rindge Evening School has a record enrollment of 540 students and a waiting list for admission to courses in cabinet making, auto-mechanics, upholstering, and welding. Enrollment in academic evening courses at Cambridge High and Latin School, on the other hand, ranges around 475, and all courses are open.

Middle Schools in Alabama

The Decatur, Alabama, school system reports that it is the first district in the state to reorganize its entire pupil population around the middle schools. In September two new middle schools will accommodate all of the district's pupils in grades 6 through 8. Organized according to the "school-within-a-school" concept, each of the new middle schools will consist of three subschools enrolling a cross section of students in the various grade levels. The schools will feature interdisciplinary teams and expanded use of paraprofessionals.

The new buildings were constructed as a result of a bond issue which was approved 9 to 1 by the voters in November 1969.

Overage Students

A study conducted by the Albuquerque Public Schools has shown that 72.5 percent of the dropouts from Albuquerque schools were above age for their grade level. At one elementary school, 29.7 percent of the pupils were above age for their grade level, with other elementary schools as low as 2.6 percent. Data gathered in the study will be used in planning curricular and instructional changes in Albuquerque schools.

Commented Frank Angel, Educational Research Analyst for the school district: "The problem of overage, repeaters, high retention rate, and slow learners clearly indicates the need of instructional programs planned to meet the needs of individual schools."
Counseling Course

Richland County District One, South Carolina, guidance counselors are attending a new counseling course conducted by the Desegregation Center at the University of South Carolina. The purpose of the course is to facilitate counseling in an integrated setting. Such matters as the background of the counselor as it affects his counseling, understanding one's own attitudes, and the effects of attitudes and behavior on others are considered.

School Raises Coupons for Kidney Machine

Pupils and teachers at Kelly Elementary School in Portland, Oregon, have collected 20,000 Betty Crocker coupons to provide a home kidney machine for an Oregon kidney patient. In accord with an agreement with the General Mills Company, the coupons and some contributions of money will be used by the Kidney Association of Oregon to save some patient the great expense and inconvenience of weekly visits to the hospital.

The coupons were presented to the Kidney Association in the Kelly School auditorium. The drive for additional coupons is continuing at both Kelly and Whitman elementary schools in Portland.

Student Leadership Training Program

A program for training student leaders, which began as a response to a crisis situation in some Kansas City, Missouri, high schools last fall, has been expanded to include all of the district's high schools. Training sessions last four one-half days and are held at the Board of Education building. Selection procedures vary. Students from one school were selected by the principal on the basis of their willingness to participate. Representatives from other schools have been selected by counselors or by the principal and counselors jointly.

Central office staff as well as nonschool personnel in the areas of human relations and law enforcement conduct the training sessions. Student reactions to the course generally have been favorable; students believe that as a result of their participation, they are better equipped to assume leadership roles. As one student put it: "The program enlightened us on how we can make a better school and who to come to see in time of trouble or need."

Heart Tests in Schools

Now in its second year is a heart sound screening program in the public schools of Springfield, Missouri. All first, fifth, and ninth graders who have their parents' permission will have their hearts listened to this year.

The testing is done with the cooperation of the Missouri Heart Association and the Missouri Regional Medical Program. An electronic device called the Phono Cardio Scan is used.

Last year 4,957 pupils were tested, with 327 referred to a physician for further testing. Where an abnormal heart sound is detected, parents are urged to have the child examined by a physician. Medical assistance is provided for those who cannot afford it.

Secondary Reading Improvement Project

Three junior and three senior high schools are now being served by the Kansas City Public Schools' secondary reading project. Five secondary reading teachers are working with language arts and social studies teachers in these schools to improve student reading skills. They are also working directly with groups of students and individuals whose work is below grade level.

Schools involved in the program are Martin Luther King, Southeast, and Northeast Junior Highs; and East, Southeast, and Northeast High Schools.

Innovative Program in Chicago

A new educational design is being implemented in third and fourth grade classrooms at John Foster Dulles Elementary School in Chicago. Unlike the traditional classroom setting, there are no assigned seats. Instead there are learning centers for the various curriculum areas—children move from center to center as they complete learning tasks. They work individually, in pairs, or in groups. Field trips are planned around specific interest groups and most are limited to ten children. It is felt that in this way teachers can spend more time helping children learn than restraining them.

Curriculum Evaluation

In a recent opinion survey of adult citizens residing in Tucson School District 1, vocational education was rated
as "very important for every child" by 39 percent of the Anglo respondents, 62 percent of the Mexican American respondents, and 76 percent of the Negro respondents. The survey was conducted by Research Services, Inc., of Denver, Colorado.

Arizona School Communications

Journalism students in each of the high schools in Tucson write weekly school pages for the Arizona Daily Star and the Tucson Daily Citizen. Students also write for Phoenix newspapers. The purpose is to tell the "high school story" to the general public.

Differentiated Staffing in Norfolk

At present, only five Norfolk, Virginia, elementary schools are organized on a completely self-contained classroom basis. All others have some form of differentiated instruction at most grade levels. At the junior high level, pupils are grouped by ability in the various subject areas.

Reading Competency Found Predictive

A comprehensive study of Fairfax County, Virginia, public school children who entered kindergarten in the fall of 1968 has found that test behaviors of beginning kindergartners are predictive of reading competency at the end of grade one. Concluded the researchers, "Early assessment, even if remediation is not at hand, at least has the merit of forestalling inappropriate and necessarily discour-aging instructional procedures for the less-ready child."

Curriculum Council Alive and Well in Omaha

Omaha Public Schools' Citizens Advisory Committee provides an open forum for interested citizens to discuss and offer suggestions for improving the school system. The committee began in 1946 when Superintendent Harry A. Burke developed the "Curriculum Council."

Now, a quarter-century later, the committee is flourishing with a different name and nearly 100 members who serve for two to three years. (Last year, two students from each of the high schools were added.)

Any interested citizen may be considered for membership on the CAC by making his interest known to a school principal or to Superintendent Knutzen. At present the group is discussing such items as the school district's new drug education program.

Updating

The University of California at Santa Barbara has received a grant from the Ford Foundation to conduct two seminars on the updating of Ralph W. Tyler's Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction.

Mobile Speech Lab for Pasadena Preschoolers

Speech handicapped children in the Pasadena Unified School District between the ages of three and five years are being given speech therapy two to three times a week in a 25-foot panel truck laboratory. In groups of four or fewer, children are being helped to listen and become aware of words, their meanings, and sentence structure. The program is being funded for three years by an ESEA (Title VI) grant of $48,000.

Continuous Progress Program in Fort Worth

Sixty-five of the 79 elementary schools in Fort Worth are attempting to follow the continuous progress approach to learning. Each pupil progresses at his own individual rate. No grade levels are attached to the work and letter grades have been eliminated. There are no promotions and no retentions. Teachers indicate in reports to parents whether a child is making satisfactory progress or limited progress in academic, personal, and social growth areas in terms of the child's ability and needs.

Explains Superintendent Julius Truelson: "In brief, the paramount purpose of this plan is to improve the quality of learning for each child and to make for him a challenging and satisfying experience in school."

Drug Prevention Proposals

Recently, more than 150 student representatives of Fort Worth high schools met with 30 administrators to seek solutions to the drug problem in the schools. Methods of drug education proposed by the students included: (a) counselors nearer the age level of the students should be trained to counsel students about their problems; (b) college age students, addicts, or former addicts could speak to high school...
students; (c) more places should be found for young people to get together so that they have something to do other than turning to drugs for thrills; (d) entire class periods should be devoted to drug prevention programs in the schools; and (e) drug prevention education should begin at the middle school level or earlier.

Polling Program

Randomly selected residents of the San Antonio Independent School District are participating in an educational survey which began in March and will continue until August. The school district hopes to use the data received in planning for the future.

Residents who responded affirmatively to an invitation to take part are being mailed a questionnaire once a month for five months to fill out and return. All materials in the polling program are printed in both Spanish and English. Questions on the polls range from a measure of the respondents' knowledge of the San Antonio schools to evaluation of current programs. The project is a joint undertaking between the school district and Region 20 Education Service Center.

Teacher Supply and Demand

According to the NEA Research Division, a record 301,000 persons completed teacher preparation programs with at least a bachelor's degree during the 1969-70 academic year—an increase of 9.5 percent over the previous year. While surveys of state education departments and 67 of the largest school systems pointed to a generally adequate supply of teachers, shortages were reported in secondary school mathematics, special education, vocational-technical education, and industrial arts.

Staff Integration Increases in Dayton

A number of Dayton, Ohio, schools which had no nonwhite staff members in 1967-68 now have up to 28.6 percent black teachers on their staffs. Over the same period, other schools with all-black faculties have been integrated. Black principals and assistant principals have increased from 18.7 percent of the administrative staff in 1967-68 to 31.5 percent this year.

Student TV Project

High school students in Middle Island, New York, produce a 30-minute telecast each week which includes news of the school and local community. Through the use of a portable video tape recorder, the students have been able to incorporate in their programs "on-the-spot" interviews with adult members of the community on such topics as welfare, housing, employment, discrimination, the war in Vietnam, and the functions of the schools.

The students are planning a series of "living room dialogues"—programs involving neighborhood discussion groups—to address problems of interest to the community.

Accountability for New York City Schools

"This is going to be more difficult than putting a man on the moon," observed an officer of Educational Testing Service after the New York City Board of Education engaged the testing agency to develop an accountability design for assessing the effectiveness of the city's schools. The one-year $100,000 contract calls for the development of a system for evaluating the performance of pupils, teachers, and administrative staff.

Pointing to the enormous complexity of the educational accountability project, one educator asked, "Why doesn't the city begin with a relatively simple problem of accountability—such as crime and safety, housing, employment, mass public transportation, clean streets, clean air, noise abatement, dependable electric power, and good government?"

School-Community Efforts Improve Communication

The Department of School-Community Relations of the Buffalo Public Schools has expanded activities on a variety of levels to improve communication between the schools and the public. Staff members have organized parent advisory committees in a number of schools and have also given assistance to student organizations. Other efforts include news releases to community weeklies and the inauguration of a weekly series of programs broadcast over WEBR Radio entitled "About Your Schools." Participants are teachers, students, and administrators.
The Department coordinates visits of all interested groups to the schools and conducts public information meetings, as well as working closely with home-school coordinators who deal directly with community interests.

“Our Best” Book
Buffalo Public School children have created an anthology of poetry and prose entitled Our Best in 1970. The 304-page publication is the thirteenth in a series. Works are not categorized by grade. Instead they are classified under broad concepts such as Laughter, Concern, Love, Awareness, Nature, and Play.

Superintendent Joseph Manch states the case for such an anthology:

Each one of us has the opportunity to listen and hopefully to understand what moves our children to laugh, cry, doubt, or wonder. More significantly, each one of us has the opportunity to learn something about himself from a generation of young people that struggles to endure in this time of anxiety and confusion.

Public Funds for Private Tuition

When a bill was introduced in the New York State Legislature to provide tuition grants to parents whose youngsters attend private and parochial schools, Governor Rockefeller warned that such legislation would be "the first step to undermine, if not destroy, the public school system." However, Rockefeller announced that he is seeking other methods of aiding parochial and private schools.

The New York State bill is similar to the controversial voucher plan supported by funds from the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity.

Required Course in Consumer Education Advocated

The Attorney General of New York State has called upon the state’s Commissioner of Education to require that all high school students take courses in consumer education which would include "the study of retail-installment sales contracts, buying on time, mortgage financing, interest charges, shopping for merchandise and services, as well as how to recognize frauds."

In response to growing complaints by victimized consumers, the Bureau of Consumer Frauds and Protection of the Attorney General’s Office has helped prepare a consumer-education textbook for high school students.

Technical School Has Store

The Wrapper, a new men’s shop in the Atlanta Area Technical School, provides marketing students with real-life experiences in buying, selling, inventory, management, accounting, displays, advertising, and sales promotion.

A survey to determine the merchandise preferred by the student body was made by the class. The marketing research data derived from the questionnaire were used in buying the initial inventory for the store. The training program in marketing enrolls 20 students twice a year. Each student will have experience in every phase of sales and management training in the new store. A contest was held to select the name for the store, hence—The Wrapper.

Mini Grants

Small grants ranging from $25 to $250 are being offered to teachers in the Puget Sound (Washington) area to help them implement new ideas and projects in the classroom. The money is from a fund established by the School Information and Research Service (SIRS).

Program for Gifted in Memphis

Gifted upper-elementary grade pupils in Memphis city schools are being trained in the use of multi-media materials and equipment so that they can produce and videotape their own plays and puppet shows. One section of students at Grahamwood Elementary School attended a hearing at Juvenile Court and tape-interviewed the judge. Then they produced and videotaped a puppet show based on what they had seen and heard. The program is part of Project CLUE (Cooperative Leadership for Urban Education), and is supported by a grant under Title III ESEA.

Lesson Plans Accompany Program Schedule

The Minneapolis Public Schools’ radio station KBEM-FM includes brief lesson plans with the schedules of broadcasts that are distributed to all teachers.

“Dial-a-Lesson”

“It’s as easy as using the telephone!” With the new “dial-a-lesson” system, Penn
State students can hear lectures and music projects, study language lessons, or pick up supplementary course materials by placing a call from one of a dozen listening centers on the University Park campus.

There are 128 audio channels in the network—but the University's learning services office, which operates the computer-based program, plans to add more channels and listening stations. In the first five weeks of operation, 59,757 requests were processed.

Pre-Election Recess Reconsidered

Many colleges and universities that provided a pre-election recess to enable students to take an active part in the political campaigns of their favorite candidates in 1970 are having second thoughts about such recesses in view of the small proportion of students who actually participated. A Rutgers University survey revealed that only some 1 percent of the University's undergraduates engaged in the 1970 campaigns during the University's eight-day pre-election recess. This finding prompted the educational policy committee of the University's Senate to recommend that the pre-election recess be dropped.

Education and Reproduction

Census data reveal that married women with no formal schooling average 4.9 children—compared with 3.04 for those with a grade school education, 2.03 for those who completed high school, and 1.83 for those with a college education.

Cooperative Information Office

Regional educational laboratories and university-affiliated research and development centers have established a central office to disseminate information about their activities. Based in Denver, the office provides school districts, firms, and individuals with facts about programs and products being researched and developed within the network of laboratories and centers. All that is required to use the Information Office is specification of a general category such as "individualized instruction." The office will supply names of project directors, abstracts of projects, and research reports at no cost.

The Information Office also publishes a newsletter which is available in limited supply on request. For additional information, write to Educational R & D Information Office, 775 Lincoln Tower, 1860 Lincoln Street, Denver, Colorado 80203.

Facility for Trainable Mentally Retarded

The Palm Avenue Exceptional Child Center in Duval County, Florida, offers a sequential training program for 150 children ages 6-16. The center resembles a cluster of small houses—its five pavilions cover a total of 22,400 square feet. The center includes a conference room equipped with closed circuit television to observe classroom activities and a therapy tank to be used in a program of swimming and related exercises. The advanced level pavilion contains a family living complex for teen-age girls and a preoccupational complex for teen-age boys.

The girls' area has an apartment to be used in teaching homemaking occupations, while the boys' complex includes a shop to prepare boys for supervised employment.

Exceptional Child Grants

The Florida State Department of Education offers summer scholarships and graduate fellowships in exceptional child education for Florida teachers of handicapped children and directors and supervisors of programs for exceptional children. Awards are made by a scholarship selection committee. Each recipient receives a weekly stipend, and tuition and fees are waived.

Student Internship in England

The University of Florida has arranged for a total of 25 students from the Elementary Education Department and two students from Special Education to intern in the British Primary Schools. A member of the faculty will accompany them as supervisor. Students and faculty members will be responsible for all expenses, and it is anticipated the venture will cost about $1,000 per person.

The internship of eight weeks will be done in the Lancashire District of England, specifically in the Infant Schools in Morecambe and Lancaster at the edge of the Lakes District. At the conclusion of the internship, students will spend a week in London, where they will visit several colleges of education, primary schools, and media centers.

It is hoped the success of this initial venture will pave the way for similar interning experiences in the future. □