

# McGavock: A Model School

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**R**ECENTLY, U.S. Commissioner of Education Sidney D. Marland has called for a total reformation of secondary education that would blend curricula and students into a single strong comprehensive secondary system. The Metropolitan Public Schools of Nashville, Tennessee, began to move in this direction about five years ago with the planning of McGavock Comprehensive High School, which opened in September 1971.

McGavock is the first of eight or nine large senior high schools which will eventually enroll all the high school students in metropolitan Nashville. The McGavock model has important implications for changing conceptions of professional personnel. Program development and models of teacher-pupil interaction demand different roles for professional personnel in this kind of school.

There is 448,000 square feet of space in the McGavock building, which was constructed at a cost of nearly \$9 million. The school site is adjacent to a 400-acre public park which has facilities for baseball, softball, golf, tennis, track, and picnics. The school system and the Metropolitan Park Board have cooperated in the development of these adjacent athletic, recreational, and aesthetic facilities.

The school is designed for implementing a truly comprehensive secondary school program. The plans for this two-story structure feature an open theatre auditorium, a horticulture area with greenhouse, learning

centers, a planetarium, a data processing lab, graphics and photography labs, and a communication skills laboratory.

Special attention has been given to the development of unique vocational-technical facilities which will promote the comprehensiveness of the school. Facilities have been included for child development careers (including a nursery), health related professions, aircraft mechanics, commercial food preparation, commercial art, data processing, plus extensive facilities for experiences and training in welding, refrigeration, automotive mechanics, electronics, sheet metal, electricity, and shop machines.

Approximately 2,700 students were enrolled in McGavock in the fall of 1971 with a maximum eventual enrollment of approximately 3,200. Because of the special programs which are available, students attend McGavock from throughout the metropolitan area although the school basically serves one attendance area.

## Philosophy

McGavock Comprehensive High School is designed to serve a diverse student population with different needs, backgrounds, and career development goals and patterns. The

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McGavock purpose includes the development of learning experiences which not only prepare students for college, but which also are relevant to other groups of students and their needs. The facilities and the size of the student population at McGavock make possible the development of curriculum programs which will meet the needs of all groups of students. This idea has not been limited to the development of additional programs, but involves building increased depth, flexibility, and relevance into traditional curriculum areas.

The general goals of the McGavock School are:

1. Curriculum programs for students of differing career patterns
2. Increased emphasis placed upon career development for *all* students, not just terminal students
3. Programs relevant to students of varying achievement and socioeconomic backgrounds
4. Increased emphasis on specialization and in-depth study within *all* areas of the curriculum
5. Personalized "small school" approach to guidance, administrative, and extracurricular programs
6. Community school programs which serve the entire community as well as the student population



McGavock High School includes facilities for developing specific vocational skills.



Increased emphasis is placed on career development for all students.

7. An exemplary model school for secondary program development for the Metropolitan Nashville School System.

## Organization

The McGavock organizational structure is designed to place special emphasis on program and curricular development through the positions of coordinator of program and staff development, coordinator of vocational-technical education, and teacher leadership positions. Administration, pupil personnel services, and community relations are the responsibility of the executive principal and four "small school" principals.

Each subject area department at McGavock is organized on a "team" basis, with departmental planning and coordination a high priority. Each department has a team leader who has designated responsibility for leadership. The larger departments have lead teachers who are the leaders of teams of teachers working on a particular phase of the program. These teacher leaders are paid small supplements. This kind of differentiated staffing arrangement plus an emphasis on in-house program direction place professional personnel in new and more responsible

## Curriculum Development

The McGavock curriculum plans were based on the idea that an instructional program should focus on "the way it should be and not how it has been done." This has resulted in a curriculum different from other high schools in Nashville. Perhaps the central thrust of the curriculum model has been diversity of program to fit diversity of student needs and interests. There is little remaining of the conventional wisdom that a segment of content is necessary and good for *all* students.

Students at McGavock have a variety of options available. Students make choices according to their own interests, needs, and backgrounds. The options include a variety of courses or programs which are not normally available—such as astronomy, geology, probability, statistics, advanced sociology, vocational-technical programs—but also a variety of options *within* particular courses.

Science, social studies, and English curricula are characterized by phase-elective options. This means that students have options to choose within particular phases of these curricula. For example, the social studies curriculum is basically designed in six-week segments. Students have a choice during one six-week segment of World Studies of studying one of three topics: (a) Religious Movements; (b) Revolution: Military and Social; or (c) Major Political Movements. During one six-week segment of



Students make choices among a variety of course offerings.



The school serves a student population with diverse needs and backgrounds.

roles regarding curriculum development at the local school.

The "small school organization" at McGavock is a compromise modification of "school-within-a-school" versus departmental organization plans. The "small school organization" utilizes a decentralized administration and pupil personnel focus while maintaining departmental organization for curriculum development. Four different small school teams, each composed of a "small school" principal and two counselors, are responsible for creating and maintaining a personal, concerned atmosphere for the 700 students the team services through administrative, guidance, and extracurricular functions.

Students are, however, scheduled in classes on a schoolwide basis. This organizational pattern is an effort to emphasize personalized aspects of the program while maintaining the benefits of schoolwide curriculum organization. The planners of this school felt that the "school-within-a-school" organization was not feasible for this school at this time. As secondary personnel become more adept, flexible, and open toward completely individualized instructional programs, the school-within-a-school organization will have enhanced potential.

American Studies I, the student will choose one of three topics: (a) The Al Capone Era; (b) Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (1940-19??); or (c) War and Peace.

Phase-elective options in English are organized on a semester basis. Eleventh and twelfth grade students have available 28 different semester length courses which they may take in lieu of traditional junior and senior English. These 28 options include more traditional segments of English such as "The Structure of English" and "Survey of American Literature." Other more exotic electives such as "Media Study," "Media Production," "Film Making," "Vocational Reading," and "Theatre Arts: Improvisation, Acting" are also included. The English curriculum and scheduling are the responsibility of the English Team so that the options are not taught as completely separate segments. Program design specifies that portions of each student's week are planned on a departmental basis, so that the program is not simply 28 courses but rather the 28 options are one major part of a total program.

The phase-elective curriculum in science at McGavock includes separate courses for the general, the terminal, and the especially interested science student. The biology program offers General Biology, Applied Biology, and two versions of Specialized Biology (BSCS Yellow and BSCS Green) as well as Advanced Biology.

The same is true of other sciences. Students choose phases of each of these courses on a six-week basis. In addition, students have a selection of three-week science experiences to choose from as a part of any of the biology courses. Many of these experiences are designed with career development patterns, such as the following: "Science for Laboratory Technicians," "Science for Cosmetologists," and "Science for Food Service." Other three-week experiences are more general, such as "Population Explosion," "Pollution," and "Drug Abuse."

The various options within the phase-elective approach have been developed by the McGavock faculty and are taught according to the faculties' abilities and interests. Many teachers have been enthusiastic about



The curriculum at McGavock fosters in-depth study in all areas.

working with specific options relating to themselves as individuals. Certainly this type of curriculum implies that teachers cannot be treated as interchangeable parts in a factory model and that individual differences of professional personnel are an important factor in curriculum development.

## Evaluative Design

McGavock's role as a model for secondary curriculum development requires systematic program evaluation. Evaluation has been a major component of the McGavock effort since its inception. A Task Force for Evaluation has been organized which works with the McGavock staff in defining, measuring, and evaluating school progress. Each department and/or program thrust has been developed with specifically measurable performance objectives. Evaluation is focusing on process as well as product and will be a continual part of the school's development. Through the evaluative effort, the Metropolitan Schools hope to be able to better make decisions as to modifications or adjustments that are needed and as to what aspects of the McGavock program should be replicated in other schools. Certainly future directions for high school program development in Nashville will begin with the McGavock effort. □

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