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The Core Curriculum Is Being Reinvented

ALMOST four years ago, Professor Arthur W. Foshay of Teachers College pointed out that "the questions of the integration of knowledge and the relevance of knowledge to the real world will not be denied," and predicted that "we will reinvent the core curriculum." Foshay's remarks were made with reference to the neglect of the great public problems in the discipline-centered curricular reforms of the 1950's and 1960's and the resultant fragmentation of knowledge.

Now a Ford Foundation report relates how a dramatic educational transformation has come about at the Grape Street School in the Watts section of Los Angeles as a result of a new core curriculum centered on the environment. Three years ago the Grape Street School had one of the worst pupil achievement records of the city's schools and was plagued by vandalism and an absentee rate of close to 30 percent. According to the Ford Foundation report, the new core curriculum has transformed the Grape Street School

into a place of learning. Absenteeism has been reduced to less than 10 percent; vandalism has all but disappeared; and reading scores have improved noticeably.

The core curriculum stresses learning through—rather than about—the environment, and the concept of environment is broadened to include social problems as well as physical surroundings. A variety of pupil projects have been undertaken with a focus on problem solving. Through the projects, attention also is given to the development of basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. The core curriculum is modeled after the Nuffield Junior Science Program in England, and the traditional classroom setting of "frontal" didactic teaching has been abandoned in favor of an open-classroom approach.

The new program at the Grape Street School has been aided by the International Center for Educational Development (ICED), an agency supported by the Ford Foundation to assist schools in in-service teacher education.

Since 1968 the Foundation has allocated \$1.5 million for environmental education on this model chiefly in ghetto schools in New York City, Los Angeles, Portland (Oregon), and Boulder (Colorado). In Cleveland, under an ICED grant, secondary school teachers and students in one school developed a 560-page curriculum guide based upon a class project on water pollution problems, and workshops are being held to acquaint other secondary schools with the core curriculum-project method.

During the 1960's the Ford Foundation supported discipline-centered curricular reforms through sizable financial grants to a number of projects.

College Curriculum Conference

"The Philosophy of Curriculum" was the theme of a two-day conference held last fall at Rockefeller University. Conducted under the auspices of the University Centers for Rational Alternatives, an organization founded under the leadership of Sidney Hook, and

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supported by a grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the conference focused on the future of general education.

William T. deBary, Vice President and Provost of Columbia University, spoke about the "creeping crises from the neglect and erosion of general education in the last decade." Commenting on deBary's paper, Sidney Hook asked, "Is it expecting too much of effective general education that it develop within students a permanent defense against gullibility? It is astonishing to discover how superstitious students are, how vulnerable to demagogic appeal, to empty show and eloquence."

Pointing to the radical shifts in what is considered essential to learn in the social sciences, Nathan Glazer of Harvard observed: "What appears to me most compelling in explaining the problem of incorporating the social sciences into general education is the simple fact that our foundations are insecure, we cannot agree on what should be taught first and what should be taught second."

No Alternative

The Berkeley, California, schools have closed two voluntary alternative schools, one serving Black and the other Chicano students, after the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare held that these schools were discriminatory and threatened to withhold funds.

Teachers Visit Across School Levels

On a recent Monday, the elementary schools in Newton, Massachusetts, were closed

and all elementary school teachers visited the junior high schools. The next Wednesday, the junior high schools were closed and junior high teachers visited the high schools and elementary schools. A few days later, the senior high schools were closed and their faculties visited the junior highs and elementary schools.

The specific goals of these visits were: to observe the learning process at other age and grade levels, to become familiar with the kinds of school experiences the students will have or have had, and to develop opportunities for improved articulation among elementary, junior high, and high schools.

Innovation Encouraged in Denver

In 1973, the Board of Education of the Denver Public Schools authorized \$175,000 to provide funds for those elementary and secondary schools which suggest innovative programs. Twenty-one schools have received approval to proceed. Projects range from environmental studies to mathematics laboratories to the world of work. Projects will be evaluated at the local school and examined for possible adoption in other areas of the city.

Ideas for a Mathematics Club Program

Topics for Mathematics Clubs is a 106-page booklet for use by student members of mathematics clubs and their sponsors. One of the purposes of a mathematics club is to provide the opportunity for students to study and present before their peers exciting

math topics that are not ordinarily discussed in the classroom. It was with this idea in mind that the booklet was conceived; each of the 10 chapters is intended to be a "turn on" treatment of a mathematical topic (to interest students in that topic). Each is written as a collection of related subtopics so that a committee of students can see the subtopic breakdown and each take a subtopic for presentation at a club meeting. The bibliographies in the booklet suggest to the student where he can read on his subtopic before presenting it to the club.

Topics for Mathematics Clubs may be ordered for \$2.80 per copy. All orders totaling \$20 or less must be accompanied by full payment. Address orders to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1906 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.

Court Decisions

The 17th issue of the *Litigation Docket of Pending Cases Affecting Freedom of Religion and Separation of Church and State*, published by the Commission on Law, Social Action, and Urban Affairs of the American Jewish Congress, covers 86 cases involving federal and state aid to sectarian schools and colleges, and financial assistance to nonpublic school parents or students. The introduction to the 110-report reviews the decision last summer by the U.S. Supreme Court prohibiting government aid to elementary and secondary religious schools and parents of children enrolled in such schools, and offers the following conclusion:

Taken together with similar holdings by the Supreme Court

in 1971, the elementary and secondary school aid decisions must be regarded as landmark rulings in the area of religious freedom and church-state separation in this country. The effect of these decisions will be to staunch any substantial flow of government funds for the support of religious schools. While it is doubtful that all parochial activity will now cease, the Supreme Court by its latest decisions has effectively barred most significant modes of state governmental funding of religious schools.

The Commission invites interested persons to notify it of the initiation of any new lawsuits. A copy of the latest docket of pending cases affecting religious freedom and church-state separation may be obtained by writing to American Jewish Congress, 15 East 84th Street, New York, New York 10028.

Soviet View on Intelligence Tests

An item in *Soviet Life*, a magazine published in Moscow for sale in the United States, quotes Professor Artur Petrovsky of the USSR on aptitude testing:

Intelligence tests contradict our concepts of educational psychology. . . . In the Soviet Union children are not singled out by their intelligence quotient, as is done in many capitalist countries, where a low quotient has ruined more than one child's chances. . . .

Analysis of intelligence tests shows that they do not measure innate gifts, but a certain baggage of information and skill. . . . It is impossible to plumb the depths of "mental giftedness" with tests.

While Soviet psychologists have no objections to attempts to use certain diagnostic tests and to express their re-

sults quantitatively, Professor Petrovsky notes that, where the measurement of mental capacities is concerned, "so far, it is no more than a groping attempt."

Students Build Dome

Fifth and sixth grade pupils of Mrs. Irene Richards at Jose Ortega School in San Francisco recently completed an ambitious project which will continue to enhance their learning experiences. They constructed their own geodesic dome which houses their audiovisual equipment, educational games, and learning centers.

The dome consists of 75 large triangles so constructed as to form a 16½-foot diameter structure. The project has enriched learning in the fields of art, science, and math; these areas were involved in pre-construction discussions and preparations. Pupils learned about other modular structures in everyday life, studied geometric shapes, and experienced measuring, simple mathematics construction, and basic scientific reasoning on how a dome stands erect with central supports.

Being a room within a room, the dome provides privacy and quiet for learning centers and independent study.

Sixth Graders Conduct Dental Research

Sixth grade pupils at Magruder Middle School in Torrance, California, recently conducted a controlled research study to determine whether supervised classroom brushing of their teeth would result in better dental hygiene and dental condition than the demonstration method of dental

instruction which is usually given to pupils once a year. Routine dental inspection had indicated that students had a great deal of gum inflammation and plaque concentration on the teeth.

For one month, members of two classes brushed under supervision while members of the other classes served as the control group. When pupils' teeth were checked, outstanding differences were found between those who brushed under supervision and the control pupils; significant improvement was noted in the gum condition of those who brushed under supervision.

A Torrance dentist provided the brushes and inspected teeth while the school nurse coordinated the project. It is also of interest that pupils with poor gum condition volunteered to brush daily with the school nurse for just two weeks. The gum condition of these pupils improved considerably.

Unique Book Fair

Elementary pupils at York School in Springfield, Missouri, had a wide selection of books to choose from during a Book Fair—Book Share project at the school. The children brought in books they had read or outgrown that they wanted to share. Then each child visited a Book Fair booth where he could choose a book he would like for his own.

Friday Fun

Every Friday between 1:45 and 3:00 p.m. is filled with excitement for pupils in the fourth through seventh grades at Margaret Mitchell Elementary School in Atlanta.

Parents and teachers work together directing nine activities: ceramics, decoupage, crafts, art, skating, dancing, gymnastics, baseball, and softball. Pupils are permitted a first, second, and third choice. Those who do not get their first choice may have it the next quarter. (Atlanta is on the quarter system.) One Fun Friday culminating activity is the "junior Olympics" in which competition takes place under foreign flags made by participants.

"Buddy System"

The Toledo Public Schools have instituted a buddy system by which an experienced teacher is assigned to each new teacher to give the latter whatever help is needed.

Humanities Newsletter

The National Endowment for the Humanities publishes a newsletter, *Humanities*, which is available to educators without charge. For a subscription to *Humanities*, write to: National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C. 20506.

School Maps for Traffic Safety

Primary pupils in Portland, Oregon, Public Schools do not have to guess about the safest routes to and from school. The Portland Traffic Safety Commission has produced street maps for all schools serving children in kindergarten through grade 3. The maps identify the location of traffic signals and pedestrian crossings patrolled by pupils or adults. Two copies of the maps were sent home with pupils so both parents and chil-

dren could jointly discover the shortest and safest route to and from school. Parents were asked to walk over the route with their child, pointing out safe crossing points.

Parents keep one copy of the map at home, returning the duplicate to school. Teachers use the duplicate map to reinforce parental instructions.

School Decentralization

New York State's Commissioner of Education has ordered an investigation into the election of the 288 members of New York City's 32 community school boards following widespread reports of voting irregularities. The 32 community boards were established in 1970 under a school decentralization plan. At the last community school board elections, only 10 percent of the eligible voters turned out. Last fall, a New York State Supreme Court justice ordered the ouster of the membership of an entire community school board after finding a number of election irregularities.

Last year, the psychologist Kenneth Clark, once a proponent of school decentralization, declared that decentralization was a failure and was being used for "power" rather than for improving the quality of education.

Student Exchange

The York County Board of Education, Ontario, Canada, has approved unanimously arrangements for a student exchange program in which 30 students from York County schools will spend most of the 1974 fall semester in Germany where they will live in German homes and attend German

schools. Grade 12 students who are achieving well in all subjects and who show particular excellence in German will be given preference.

Although the students will pay for their own expenses, the York County Board of Education plans to provide financial assistance for those youngsters who lack funds. On their return home, the Canadian students will host the German students in their homes. The York County Board of Education has allocated special funds for field trips for the German students during their stay in Canada.

Initiative for the exchange was made by Sigmund Chawanietz, head of modern languages at Stouville High School, who corresponded with the Pedagogical Exchange Service in Bonn. The final proposal was worked out with the assistance of master teachers David Shapiro and Joseph Turko.

Shattered Stereotype

Although commonly described as "a shady figure in the schoolyard," the drug dealer who sells the so-called "soft" (non-narcotic) drugs is more likely to resemble the boy next door.

Researchers at the University of Connecticut have found that dealers tend to be young men from 20 to 25 years old, the majority of whom are in college. (The dealers were identified to the researchers by drug users.) Their primary reasons for selling drugs are to obtain drugs for their own personal use or as a "favor" to friends and to finance living expenses. Half of the dealers were unemployed when surveyed.

Far West Laboratory Publications

Recent publications of the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development include the 314-page *American Government Information Unit*, which describes curriculum alternatives for secondary schools, and a 113-page booklet, *Minicourses Work*, which discusses ways of implementing minicourses in schools and colleges. For further information about these and other publications of the Far West Laboratory, write to the Laboratory at 1855 Folsom Street, San Francisco, California 94103.

ERIC Solicits Studies

ERIC is requesting research reports, program descriptions, position papers, bibliographies, and specific or general studies dealing with the preparation or in-service education of school personnel. Materials must be current, academically sound, and reproducible. (Ditto copies and papers with pencil corrections and marginal notations are not.) Documents cannot be retyped at the Clearinghouse.

Contents and availability of documents accepted for ERIC will be reported in *Research in Education*. They will also be reproduced on microfiche, xeroxed, and made available through ERIC Document Reproduction Service for a fee and at many ERIC collections around the nation.

The ERIC system provides a way to disseminate ideas and information to educators throughout the nation and world. To date, some 75,000 documents have been reported in *Research in Educa-*

tion. Send papers to ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, Suite 616, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Student Assistance Program

Neshaminy High School in Neshaminy, Pennsylvania, offers a program for the service-oriented high school student who is also interested in the field of education. Students tutor individual children, organize and present special programs, and research film or slide presentations under the supervision of elementary and secondary school staff. Two class meetings per week are provided for the study of educational philosophy, demonstration lessons, and reports of student activities. Hu-Man Corps is an elective course involving about 70 students working in ten elementary schools.

Marijuana Can Affect Circulatory System

According to researchers at Mount Zion Hospital and Medical Center in San Francisco, smoking marijuana can cause significant changes in the circulatory functions of otherwise healthy people. Subjects in the study, who ranged in age from 19 to 25, were examined before and after smoking a marijuana cigarette. The doctors observed a marked increase in the heart rate of all the subjects and also found that the rate at which the heart emptied was slowed down in all of the subjects. Although it is not yet known what effect these changes have on people with normal hearts, data suggest the changes could prove dangerous to those with rheu-

matic heart disease, a valvular disorder seen in the young.

Metric Exercise

Recently fifth and sixth graders at Kenny Elementary School in Minneapolis participated in a Metric Olympics. Events held were the 150-meter run, softball throw, and long jump measured metrically. Pupils used a metric trundle wheel to measure distances, as well as a metric tape measure. The tape measure was made as a class project.

NASA Newsletter

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is publishing a newsletter entitled *NASA Report to Educators*. Information about this newsletter and other NASA educational publications, films, and items for general distribution may be obtained by writing to National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Educational Programs Division, Washington, D.C. 20546.

Build a Solar Engine

Plans for the construction of a solar engine and solar concentrator which can be built for less than \$5 can be obtained by writing to the Educational Programs Office (204-7), NASA Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, California 94035. This project relates to the problem of the energy crisis.

Guidance Bulletin for Minority Youth

A 64-page bulletin, *Going Right On*, has been prepared by the College Entrance Examination Board to provide mi-

nority youngsters with information on selecting a college, applying for admission, and obtaining financial aid. Copies are available from: Publications Order Office, College Entrance Examination Board, Box 592, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

Free Scholarship Publications

A series of new publications designed to provide scholarship information for counselors, students, and parents is available in quantity without charge from the College Scholarship Service of the College Entrance Examination Board. These publications are: *Meeting College Costs in 1974-75*, *Helping Students Meet College Costs in 1974-75*, and *The College Scholarship Service*. For copies, write to: College Scholarship Service, Publications Order Office, Box 592, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

Social Responsibility

At Oxford Valley Elementary School in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, there are three special education classrooms for severely retarded children. Fourth, fifth, and sixth graders serve as volunteers in the spe-

cial education classroom, giving the retarded youngsters encouragement and help.

Curriculum Change in Chicago

This year Chicago public school pupils in kindergarten through grade 8 have a new component in their social studies curriculum—"career awareness." At the secondary school level there are new materials for industrial arts, mechanical drawing, vocational automotive body and fender service, and home economics. A survey course in mathematics focusing on such practical areas as consumer education and career education topics is being offered to students in grades 10 through 12 for the first time this year. An Asian studies curriculum guide, in development for three years, has also been completed. All of the foregoing were produced by teachers and principals in cooperation with the Department of Curriculum.

Art Talent Program

In 1959 the San Diego City Schools initiated a program to expand opportunities for students who demonstrate

exceptional ability and interest in art. The program involves elementary Saturday classes and secondary Saturday workshops as well as district-wide exhibitions. Secondary workshops are conducted at San Diego State University by artists from the University and the community. An important objective of the Art Talent Program is to stimulate awareness of art abilities by students and their parents. Initial recognition of talented students is the responsibility of the teacher. Principals also assist in identification and recommendation to the program.

Center Studies Instructional Change

The Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration, located at the University of Oregon, was established by the U.S. Office of Education in 1964 as a research and development center focusing on the organizational and administrative implications of instructional change. A list of the Center's publications and copies of the annual progress reports may be obtained from: CASEA Publications Dept., 1472 Kincaid, Eugene, Oregon 94701. □

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