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Economic Background Influences Test Scores

According to a survey conducted by Westat, Inc., of Rockville, Maryland, socioeconomic status accounts for 10 to 25 percent of the variation in student test scores. Westat reviewed 53 major studies of background factors which affect student achievement. They found that 20 to 50 percent of the variation in academic achievement can be accounted for by socioeconomic status, sex, race, ability, school differences, and attitudes. Conclusions reached in the study were:

1. Socioeconomic status seems to be a predominant factor in educational achievement. It was found in most of the studies reviewed and was determined by occupation and education of parents and the type of cultural and luxury items found in the home.

2. While sex plays some role in academic outcomes, its influence seemed to be greater at some ages and in some subject areas than others.

3. Even though race is closely related to socioeconomic status, it presents differences which cannot be completely explained by economic conditions.

4. While ability does influence achievement, it in turn

is affected by socioeconomic and other background factors.

5. School differences are important in measuring academic outcomes, but because school differences frequently reflect student backgrounds, they cannot be considered as separate influences.

6. Family relations, self-concept, ambitions, job attitudes, and plans for further education are other factors affecting educational outcomes.

The report, "Associations Between Educational Outcomes and Background Variables: A Review of Selected Literature" may be ordered from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 700 Lincoln Tower, 1860 Lincoln St., Denver, Colorado 80203.

Drug Use Still High Among American Youth

American young people substantially increase their levels of drug use in their early twenties. This is a finding of the study, "Drugs and American Youth," conducted as a part of the Survey Research Center's "Youth in Transition" project. In this national sampling, the same group of young people were followed for eight years—from the beginning of high school until five years after graduation. The drug experiences of these 1,600

young men have been recorded for much of that time.

The data indicated that substantial proportions and absolute numbers of young people were involved with drugs to some degree. In the year prior to June 1974, over one-half of all the 23-year-old males in the United States smoked some marijuana, over one-fifth made some use of amphetamines without a prescription, and the proportions for barbiturates, cocaine, and psychedelics were all greater than one-tenth during that year. The number who had tried these drugs at some time during their lives was even higher: 62% for marijuana, 32% for amphetamines, 19% for barbiturates, 22% for psychedelics, and over 6% for heroin. About half of those using drugs other than marijuana during 1974 did so only once or twice.

The peak years for regular drug use take place during college and military service when large proportions of young people are in environments comprised mainly of their peers. Between the ages of 20 and 23, 6% of the sam-

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ple used amphetamines regularly for some interval. Comparable figures for psychedelics, barbiturates, heroin, and cocaine ranged between 1.7% and 3.2%. By age 23 the numbers still reporting regular use had dropped substantially, but marijuana was an exception. A third of the sample had used marijuana weekly or more often at some time between the ages of 20 and 23, and a quarter of the sample was still using it at that rate during 1974.

Do High School Activists and Student Politicos Tend To Gravitate Toward Political Science Courses in College?

Based on a report by M. Kent Jennings and Virginia Sapiro of the University of Michigan, the answer to the above question is "no!" College students who took many political science courses were no more likely than other students to have run for office either in or outside of school during high school, and they were less likely to have ever run for office. When they did run, they were no more likely to be elected. In fact, they were somewhat less successful than students who took fewer political science courses in college.

The data for the study were drawn from a two-wave national sample of young adults for a research project directed by Jennings at Michigan's Center for Political Studies. The sample was initially interviewed in 1965 as high school seniors and was reinterviewed in 1973. Information was gathered from 81 percent of the original 1669 high school seniors. Three-fifths of these high school students attended college between 1965 and 1973. About one student in five of this group took a political science course; another one-fifth took two courses; and another one-fifth took three or more courses. Jennings and Sapiro focused

on the 60 percent of the college students who completed at least three years of college. Among this group, 32 percent took no political science courses, 42 percent took 1-2 courses, and 26 percent took three or more courses. Students in these three categories were compared with all students with three or more years of college.

The sex of the student turned out to be a major discriminator. In the aggregate, the sample was divided almost evenly between males and females; but males comprised 45 percent of those with no political science courses in college and 48 percent of those with 1-2 courses. Males were 61 percent of those college students who enrolled in three or more political science courses. While more students in general came from professional-managerial class homes than from other occupational classes, students taking the most political science courses were somewhat less representative of the professional-managerial class.

Jennings and Sapiro found that students interested in politics tended to take political science courses in college. The amount of high school exposure appeared to have little to do with college exposure. Students who used the media to follow public affairs took more political science courses, and those who talked about politics with others tended toward political science courses. It was the student's own level of political involvement, rather than the parents', which appeared to be crucial. Students who felt intensely about very specific careers such as a legal career took more political science courses.

The degree of exposure to political science in college appears to be related to passive concern with real world politics in high school rather than active involvement in the more

contrived world of high school politics. Also, it was found that the political attitudes which students held in high school were unrelated to the amount of political science taken in college.

Jennings and Sapiro concluded that the higher the exposure to political science in college the more likely it was that the students were male, that they evaluated more positively their high school equivalents of social science courses, and that they were more taken up with politics as a spectator sport during their precollegiate days. On the other hand, family background, participation in high school government and student activities, and political ideology were of scant importance in regard to taking political science courses in college.

Free Materials Can Aid Math Educators

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics has announced the information resource, *Free Materials for the Teaching of Mathematics*, which is available now and replaces the old *Free and Inexpensive Materials* list. This publication includes free, mathematics-related publications, catalogs, charts and posters, and other miscellaneous manipulatives, as well as an index of distributors for the materials. Single copies are available from the NCTM Headquarters Office, 1906 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.

Conducting a School Tour?

The Information Services Center of the Minneapolis Public Schools produced a new publication which offers suggestions and guidance for those who conduct school tours. The booklet, *Tour Guidelines for Minneapolis Public Schools*, is helpful in developing a program for school visitors. It is the result of a number of years' experience hosting several

thousand visitors from the U.S. and abroad. Inquiries about this publication should be directed to the School-Community Relations Office, Educational Service Center, Minneapolis Public Schools, 807 N.E. Broadway, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55413.

National TV News Broadcast in the Classroom

A suburban Salt Lake City, Utah, school district has secured the first licensing agreement to make videotape recordings of national television news broadcasts for use in class instruction. The Granite School District is operating under a one year, renewable license with CBS News which allows the school district to make recordings of regularly scheduled TV news broadcasts for in-school use. The terms of the license, according to a recent article in the *Newspaper Fund Newsletter*, require that the broadcasts are to be recorded in their entirety without editing, other than the deletion of commercials, and that they are to be erased within 30 days.

Donald Hess, administrator of the Granite District's media services, reports that the district uses morning and evening news broadcasts, which are taken right off the air by recorders at a master facility. Tapes are distributed to schools twice weekly. Teachers are able to use playback screen units in class at any time.

For more information about the licensing agreement, contact Joseph Bellon, Resources Development and Production, CBS News, 524 W. 57th St., New York, New York 10019.

Dial-a-Poem in Louisville

Student-authored poetry from eight Louisville, Kentucky, City Schools can be heard on Dial-a-Poem, part of the Louisville Special Arts Project funded by a grant from

the U.S. Office of Education through the Kentucky Arts Commission. According to the Kentucky Department of Education's *School News*, the Dial-a-Poem program was the inspiration of Marsha Norman, Director of the Louisville Special Arts Project. Poems read on the phone are changed about every three weeks and are taped by student readers. The phone number is (502) 581-5508.

Farm and Industry Safety Course Added to Curriculum

"Human error and carelessness are the main causes of accidents." This is one of the main themes in a special farm and industry safety and health class instituted in Goldendale (Washington) High School. The innovative course began with the efforts of a concerned Goldendale farmer, Ted Hornibrook, who felt that education was the answer to the problem.

Five half-day sessions were set up to include a curriculum based on the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act of 1972 and which involved a variety of field trips to nearby farms and industries.

Student responses to the safety quiz and evaluation at the close of the course demonstrated the value of the sessions:

"I think it should be a required course."

"Takes you away from the drag of school lectures and helps you define in your own mind what potential accidents can occur."

"You see what's going on for yourself. I learn much more this way."

Superintendent Herb Calian indicates that the program was so successful that "we are adding it to the curriculum."

Advice Regarding Driver Education "Loaners"

The Idaho State Department of Education *News and*

Report indicates that inflation and high interest rates are posing a threat to the state's use of free loan driver education automobiles. Because of the increased cost, some dealers in various parts of the state are talking about a rental fee to the schools for the use of these cars. This is of great concern because, without free loaners, driver education costs would soar, and this may end the program as we know it today.

Factory representatives indicate that the factory allowance should offset the normal wear and tear on each car and that dealers probably should not charge a rental fee. Payment for installation of dual control brakes and maintenance are costs that the school district probably should bear. Anything above normal wear and tear should also be paid by the school.

Vegetable Gardening in the Curriculum

A complete field and classroom vegetable gardening program for use in elementary schools has been developed by Gardens for All, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to the goal of broadening public interest in community gardening as a learning experience and with the aim of helping consumers in the fight against inflation. The complete program will eventually include grades four through six and will provide organizational materials for school administrators as well as lesson plans, visual aids, and other classroom materials. The package of curricular materials is being developed by Peter J. Wotowec, Supervisor of Horticulture Education in Cleveland, Ohio, where gardening has been taught as part of the public school curriculum since 1904.

Further details are available from Gardens for All, Inc., P.O. Box 2302, Norwalk, Connecticut 06852.

High School Placement Services Needed in Wyoming

High schools endeavor to provide services for seniors who are planning to continue their formal education yet 45 percent of the Wyoming seniors who report that they are available for the job market receive little or no assistance. According to Mark Fox, Assistant Superintendent of the Wyoming State Department of Education, writing in *The Wyoming Educator*, "the plight of these seniors becomes one of an abrupt transition from student to unemployed adult. They must take it upon themselves to knock on doors, go for interviews, be confronted with a different environment than the old school building, and be challenged for wanting to be useful and worthwhile." Of course, the responsibility "to place a graduate in a job, at least one position after graduation" would present some problems in gearing up to meet these needs. But, the benefits accruing to the total school program, particularly the curriculum, might well be compensating. In states like Wyoming, with limited numbers of school districts and a growing employment trend, a school placement program could survive and thrive.

English Electives Still Popular

The proliferation of high school English electives that began a few years ago still goes on. "Not all are carefully worked out, but may be motivated only by what other schools are doing and what is popular at the time," says Robert Carruthers, Chief of the New York State Education Department's Bureau of English Education. Thus the electives need to be plotted beforehand to fulfill the goals and purposes of the overall high school English program. Lack of attention to the school's responsibility to develop students' specific skills in reading,

writing, speaking, and listening is at the base of the concerns of state educators in assessing the validity of the new electives.

The variety is nearly endless in the titles—Literature of the 1920's, Satire, The Alienated, Bible as Literature, Existentialism, Steinbeck, The Supernatural, Protest, Gothic Literature, Play Production, Radio and TV, are some examples. Electives may range from minicourses lasting from one to six weeks to full semester or year courses. Most are offered in senior high school grades. "About 30 to 40 percent of the high school seniors in New York State now have a choice of electives in senior year English," reports Carruthers. "Electives need to be more than entertaining, they should be part of an entire program with attention to skills." Good features of the most effective programs are that students can choose the electives consistent with their general ability in English, a structure exists in terms of the skills each course is intended to present, and there are opportunities for broadened learning within a single course.

Approaches to Values Education

"Values education is currently one of the most exciting and explosive new developments in education. While educators have not completely neglected this area in previous decades, there has been in the past several years a spectacular upsurge in and emphasis on 'values' and 'valuing' in education," says Douglass Superka, writing in the *Social Science Education Consortium Newsletter*.

Among other problems which have emerged is the need to deal with an overwhelming amount of curriculum and teacher background materials which have and continue to be produced and dis-

seminated. In order to alleviate some of the confusion over materials, eight values education approaches are suggested as follows:

1. *Evocation.* The purpose of the evocation approach is to help students evince and express their values (personal moral emotions) genuinely and spontaneously without thought or hesitation.

2. *Inculcation.* The basic purpose of the inculcation approach is to instill or internalize certain desirable social or human values into students.

3. *Awareness.* The aim of this approach is to help students become aware of and identify their own values and those of others.

4. *Moral reasoning.* The moral reasoning approach to values education attempts to stimulate students to develop more complex patterns of moral reasoning.

5. *Analysis.* The analysis approach seeks to help students use logical thinking and scientific investigation procedures in dealing with value issues (determining the goodness or worth of phenomena).

6. *Clarification.* The focus of the clarification approach is to help students use both rational thinking and emotional awareness to examine personal behavior patterns and clarify and actualize values.

7. *Commitment.* Commitment provides specific opportunities for students to engage in personal and social action in relation to their values.

8. *Union.* The fundamental purpose of the union approach to values education is to help students to perceive themselves and act not as separate egos but as parts of a larger, interrelated whole—the human race, the world.

These approaches are suggested as a useful framework which curriculum workers may use to deal with the growing

quantity of values education materials currently available to us.

Learner Verification and Revision of Textbooks

LVR (learner verification and revision) is a term which promises to spread to other states since California and Florida passed legislation which initiated this process into their textbook selection procedures. According to the *Legislative Review* of the Education Commission of the States, LVR is a form of accountability for textbook and media publishers, mandating that they spell out how learners and teachers are involved in preparing and revising their materials.

Implementing the process with guidelines is difficult. Publishers and media people are concerned about hidden costs and the possibility that neglecting a small segment of a guideline item somewhere could knock them out of a statewide adoption. State department personnel see the process as difficult to manage with many of the variables normally beyond their control.

Student Achievement Related to School Expenditures

"Money does make a difference in educational achievement." This assertion is made in a recent issue of the *County Superintendent's Newsletter* published by the West Virginia Department of Education. A study made in West Virginia compared 1974 achievement test scores at grades three, six, nine, and eleven with the school expenditures of the fifty-five counties. Statistically significant correlations were found for each of the four time periods (five year fiscal period 1970-1974, ten year period 1965-1974, fifteen year period 1960-1974, and twenty year period 1955-1974) between average financial expenditure and the 1974 test

results. In fact, increasingly strong correlations were discovered as the time periods lengthened from 5 to 20 years. "Thus, this study suggests not only that achievement scores are related to the level of expenditures, but that the longer the expenditures are either high or low, the greater the likelihood that student achievement will likewise be high or low."

Are Advanced Placement Exams Valid?

Results of the French Language Examination validity study, in which 21 institutions participated, showed that high school students taking the AP Exam scored significantly higher than did college students in the equivalent college studies (third-year courses in Advanced Composition and Conversation). In the study which was conducted in the spring of 1975, 1,370 AP candidates, 460 third-year college students, and 826 second-year college students took the objective (listening-reading) section of the French Language Examination.

In addition to the higher scores, a comparison of college course grades with AP Exam grades indicated that standards applied in awarding AP grades are more strict than the standards used in the participating colleges' courses. These findings suggest liberalizing the standards set for awarding credit and placement to AP French candidates.

Students Care About the Environment

In a recent survey of 2,000 8th graders in Illinois, it was found that 82.8 percent of those surveyed wish more people knew about pollution and would work to solve pollution problems. The Illinois Inventory of Educational Progress was conducted by the Illinois Office of Education's Assess-

ment and Evaluation Planning Section.

Students were asked to rate the extent to which 12 environmental problems had been discussed in school. The topic rated by most students (54.5 percent) as being at least well discussed was energy demands. Other topics rated as at least well discussed were: air pollution (46.9 percent), water supply and pollution (40 percent), transportation (39.8 percent), depletion of natural resources (35.5 percent), forest and wildlife conservation (35.3 percent), population growth and distribution (24 percent), soil erosion (23.5 percent), disposal of solid waste (22.6 percent), noise pollution (20.8 percent), and use of pesticides (12.8 percent).

In a rating of ways in which an individual could help correct environmental problems, the most frequently mentioned method was buying soft drinks in returnable bottles which 85.6 percent of the students indicated they favored.

Combating "Senioritis"

A recent publication of the New York State Department of Education urged that administrators review their twelfth-grade offerings to reduce "senioritis." Senior programs which do not meet needs of these students result in student apathy, boredom, and general indifference in the latter part of the senior year. For some students, this problem may be met through advanced placement courses which introduce them to college-level instruction in their senior year. Also, accelerated high school graduation is resulting in some cases from the combination of earlier maturity and more appropriate elementary and secondary school experiences. Other efforts to meet the problem are introduction of new electives, greater scheduling flexibility, more

adequate guidance services, and more active community service for seniors.

What Is a Successful Innovation?

What constitutes a successful innovation? Jeanne Widmer, Educational Specialist in the Boston Regional Education Center, writing in the *Common Wealth of Massachusetts* reports the results of a statewide survey conducted with a randomly selected sample of Title III projects funded under ESEA.

Several preconceptions about innovations were found to be invalid. For example, communities which adopt Title III innovations are *not* wealthier or of higher social status than communities which did not adopt. Nor do adopting communities spend more per pupil than non-adopting communities.

Adopted innovations do not seem to be tied to formal or informal needs assessments; nor do they necessarily change a negative attitude in a local school system toward such issues as racism, prejudice, or power structure. Adopted innovations tend to meet and do not change their objectives, and they rely upon both inter-

nal and external evaluation to achieve their objectives.

The survey indicated that school system support was found to play a role in the success of an adopted innovation. System support included substantial financial aid and other support such as time and resources of school personnel as well as moral support. In regard to the leadership style of project directors, it was found that directors of adopted innovations were more directive with their staffs.

In summary, the survey, which utilized interviews and questionnaires to secure data from project directors, school superintendents, staff members, and state Title III staff members, found the major variables for the successful adoption of an educational innovation to be the strengths of the director, the support of the school system, and the project's objectives.

New Curriculum Projects

Several new projects having implications for curriculum are summarized here with addresses provided for those seeking more information:

- Community Change, Inc., P.O. Box 146, Reading.

Massachusetts 01867, has brought out a flier, *Toward a Pluralistic Society*, which may be of interest to many readers.

- You should be aware of the work of the League of United Latin American Citizens National Education Service Centers, LNESC. This is a non-profit government funded organization aimed at increasing the number of educationally disadvantaged persons attending American colleges and universities, increasing the retention of educationally disadvantaged persons in American colleges and universities, and increasing the awareness of educational problems of the Spanish-surnamed population. The program has been in operation over two years. Additional information may be obtained by writing LULAC National Education Service Centers, 400 1st St., N.W. Suite 716, Washington, D.C. 20001.

- A project has been funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to study crime and violence-curbing programs for schools. Information is available from Research for Better Schools, Inc., 1700 Market St., Suite 1700, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103. □

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