

TEN YEARS HENCE: THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND USAGE CENTER

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What will the curriculum development and usage center be like a decade from now? Here are some projections, based on today's realities and tomorrow's hopeful developments.

MEDIA center is now common nomenclature for the school district library and/or audiovisual center in medium to large sized school districts. This term exemplified the evolving needs of school districts as they sought to change and augment print and audio/video holdings to meet the education explosion of the 60's and early 70's. Changing curriculum needs, the emergence of multiethnic texts, programmed learning materials, multimedia kits, soft and hardware and other curriculum materials necessitated many of the changes which saw the evolution from the school district library to the media center.

As one projects the media center ten years hence, one must take into consideration some of the emerging trends in education. Among these are: the professionalization of teachers, greater community involvement in education, more individual teacher curriculum choice and development, emergence of paraprofessionals, and technological progress.

Let me propose for school districts with

more than ten schools not a media center but a curriculum development and usage center ten years hence. Note the changed name. With the professionalization of teachers, which is a process already begun, the pedagogical skills of individual staff members will be greatly enhanced. A school district can reasonably expect that the majority of its staff members in the next ten years will be much more professionally oriented. By this I mean that staff members will:

- Have a performance-based teacher education program or the equivalent post-credential education

- Possess functional skills in diagnostic and prescriptive teaching

- Be able to plan for individuals, small groups, and total groups on a short and long range basis

- Function as an educational resource person rather than as a dispenser of knowledge and information

- Use teaching resources of many kinds and varieties rather than texts

- See curriculum as needs fulfillment rather than prescribed data.

Given these elements of professionalization the teacher would seek a center where:

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—Materials and media would be available for curriculum development.

—Space would be available to gather resources, sort them out, write or prepare learning sequences, and use human resources to provide specialized services or act as consultants. Space allotment should vary from individual, through small group to larger groups, 20-30.

—Equipment such as hard and soft media would be available for immediate usage including individual screening areas.

—Work areas for the gathering of media and print materials would be centered on curriculum areas, such as social studies, science, mathematics, language, and health.

—Human resources would be available to the teachers including curriculum specialists, media specialists, curriculum support personnel such as psychometrists, health services, media technicians, and additional personnel which the district may be able to provide.

Teachers Identify Needs

It should be noted that the role of the curriculum development and usage center should be to respond to teacher needs as they identify these and then to provide the resources and the facilities to meet such needs. The teacher's needs, in the next ten years, will change from checking out materials to be used in the classroom to the actual development of unique and personalized curriculum materials representing individual student needs noted by the teacher.

The teacher, on coming to the development center, will expect to work with a staff that will not only gather materials and media, but also work with him or her in the fulfillment of the need. The center director and staff will be trained in curriculum and will themselves be former classroom teachers. They should be prepared to assist in gathering media and material, act as curriculum resource persons, critique developed material, and assist in technical media operation.

In addition, curriculum specialists should be available after two or three p.m. to act as resource persons. Their offices should

be in the curriculum development and usage center and adjacent to the work areas of their particular specialization. For example, the curriculum specialist in reading should have an office adjacent to the collection of materials and media in reading.

Traditionally, audiovisual equipment has been located in a central area. Ten years hence in the curriculum development and usage center, equipment would be found in several areas—in each of the curriculum clusters so that it could be used in that area.

Greater Community Involvement

Another emerging trend which needs to be considered in the planning of the curriculum development and usage center is greater community involvement in education. The center should include community volunteers on its staff. It should plan for regular meetings of parent advisory groups for each curriculum area, Parent Teacher Association and other parent/community group meetings during the day and in the evening, parent education workshops and parent study groups, and coordination of community resources for classroom visitations.

During the next ten years I feel that there will be a move to set up parent advisory groups for each curriculum area. There will be one for reading, for math, for science, and so forth. Members of these groups will need information and data; they will need to utilize the center for their personal growth to act in their advisory capacity. Time for study sessions and materials review should be provided by the center.

Meetings, whenever possible, should be held in the curriculum cluster area, but there should be an area where larger groups might meet.

Parent education workshops in coordination with Parent Teacher Association and/or by special invitation should be planned as a regular part of the curriculum development and usage center. These can be centered in a particular curriculum cluster area or meet in several. These should be planned to have positive results including information and data given to parents, parent participation in

creating or making curriculum material usable in a classroom, and planning for further meetings.

Another function of the curriculum development and usage center ten years hence will be the coordination of community resources. In every district there needs to be a central learning center for community resources. The most functional place would be the curriculum development and usage center. When a teacher, for example, needs to bring a truck driver into the classroom as a resource person, he or she could call the curriculum development and usage center. With the central location, use of community resources can be greatly facilitated.

We have already mentioned the professionalization of teachers and have considered the implication of that trend in terms of the center. A related trend in the next ten years is the emerging role of the individual teacher in curriculum choice and curriculum development. More and more the individual teacher will make choices in what curriculum will be used and in the development of that curriculum. This role in curriculum

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choice and development will necessitate a closer relationship between the teacher and the curriculum development and usage center. The center should provide a framework in which the teacher can weigh options and try alternatives. This can be done in the cluster areas with Center specialists and staff bringing to the teachers media, materials, and professional resources which will provide options and help the teacher make an appropriate decision.

Since the individual teacher will have greater choice in curriculum development there should be available space for individual study and work. Carrels and small study areas should be available. In addition, an

attractive and relaxing reading area would encourage individual reading for professional growth.

Paraprofessionals, an Integral Part

One of the emerging trends which will become apparent in the next ten years is the use of paraprofessionals. As paraprofessionals become a more integral part of the educational process we will see, I think, a move away from the term “aide” to the term “technician” and toward a specialization of the ancillary but integral role of the paraprofessional. As their role changes, paraprofessionals will be expected to use and will need to use the center more frequently and more functionally. The center should be prepared to provide in-service sessions for paraprofessionals in the areas of their needs and offer workshop sessions for groups of paraprofessionals.

Further, the paraprofessional can be expected to use the center in the same manner as the teacher, with the center providing services for the paraprofessional as needed in similar categories as with the teacher.

It is difficult at this time to predict the exact nature of the technology that will be available in the next ten years. In terms of the center, provisions for changes in technology and accompanying budget considerations should be a major planning component. Center staff, teachers, and curriculum specialists should have as part of their regular assignment keeping abreast of technological changes and should meet regularly to plan for implementing appropriate changes. One major emphasis for the center would certainly be that of a changing and growing curriculum support center. The inclusion of new technological changes would be an essential and integral part of an ongoing and growing center.

Some ideas about the career development and usage center ten years hence have been presented here. With all these considerations included in the center planning, the result will be an asset to the school district and an indispensable adjunct to the individual teacher. □

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