

News Notes

by Bob L. Taylor and Robert C. McKean

Pupils Learn About Being Handicapped

Trying to understand a Laurel and Hardy film without the sound can be frustrating. It is through experiences like these and other activities that about 100 children at Forest Park Elementary School in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, are learning what it is like to be blind or deaf. The children are participating in a project called, "Understanding the Child with Special Needs." The objective of the project is to devise a program for elementary school children to aid them in developing positive attitudes toward and greater understanding of children with special needs.

Eventually, the child with special needs will be placed in public school classrooms; hence, classmates need to develop an understanding of handicapped children. In weekly afternoon sessions, pupils take part in frustrating experiments and role-playing, explore aids and devices used by the handi-

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capped, meet guests with special needs, and discuss their own feelings about people with special needs.

The project was planned to begin with blindness and

deafness, which could be more easily understood and simulated by the pupils than other handicaps. It is expected that motor problems and mental retardation will be more difficult for the pupils to accept and understand.

In addition to helping the elementary school child understand pupils with special needs, the project is designed to offer the classroom teacher guidance in handling handicapped children in the classroom. There will be five workshops through which the teachers will be introduced to the material to be used in their classes, and to the experiments and activities their pupils will experience.

Blue Vision: A Learning Disability

Over ten percent of the children in a typical classroom have either blue vision deficiency or visual-perception-motor dysfunction. These two problems continue to remain largely ignored in most schools. Children with blue vision deficiency are frustrated by the widespread use of blue-lined paper, blue or purple spirit masters, and green chalkboards. These children would be better served by black-lined paper, and black and white copiers. Also, it is suggested that schools paint their green chalkboards black and use

yellow chalk. However, the ideal arrangement for these children would be yellow chalkboards with black chalk, since this would provide the best contrast for them.

There are no exact figures on the number of children with blue vision deficiency; however, one study found that up to 70 percent of all six-year-olds show less ability to perceive colors in the blue-violet range than other colors. Growing concern over blue vision has caused the Educational Testing Service to change the tint of its Scholastic Aptitude Test from blue to brown.

Children with visual-perception-motor problems, as well as those with visual disabilities, should sit near the chalkboard and should never have to endure the pressure of timed tests.

Adapted from *Nation's Schools Report*, a new McGraw-Hill newsletter for educators. For further information: *Nation's Schools Report*, 230 West Monroe St., Chicago, Illinois 60606.

The American Revolution Through Foreign Eyes

What do textbooks tell students in foreign countries about the American Revolution? A new book, *The American Revolution: Selections from Secondary School History Books of Other Nations*, offers insight as to how our struggle for independence is viewed by other

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peoples and adds an international dimension to our perspective on the significance of the Revolution.

The 13 countries represented in the collection include at least one leading nation from each of the principal regions of the world. They are: Argentina, Canada, The People's Republic of China, Egypt, France, The Federal Republic of Germany, Ghana, Great Britain, India, Israel, Japan, Mexico, and the U.S.S.R.

The material in this book was compiled by the Comparative Education Section of the U.S. Office of Education's Division of International Education. Selections, originally published in nine different languages, are translated into English where necessary.

For further information: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Station To Be Art School

The Cincinnati Union Terminal will be the new home of the city's School for Creative and Performing Arts. The currently idle station will be remodeled as a transportation center with a grant from the Federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration. Two million dollars of the grant will be used by the city to develop part of the station as a school. The public schools will contribute

\$1.5 million to the project. The school will enroll 1,350 students in grades four through twelve.

For a discussion of similar projects see: *Reusing Railroad Stations Book Two*, published by Educational Facilities Laboratories, 850 Third Ave., New York, New York 10022.

High School Skills Labs Succeed

Programs in the basic skills areas of reading, writing, and mathematics are offered on an individualized basis by Madison High School, Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia. Each of these programs serves a broad cross section of the student body—the below-grade-level student with serious skills deficiencies, the average student with specific deficiencies, and the student with adequate or above-average skills who wants to strengthen or extend these skills.

A commitment to individualization provides an atmosphere in which students can improve their skills without feeling embarrassed when they lack them. In a system of individualization, peers are not usually aware of the level at which a student is working. The instruction follows criterion-referenced diagnostic testing. By this testing, students can distinguish between what they already know and what they need to learn.

With pretesting and post-

testing in specific skill areas, teachers are able, with the help of these diagnostic tests, to focus the instruction on the area of each student's greatest need. The efficiency of the teaching-learning process is thus increased through the systematic evaluation of the student's progress.

In all of the programs, the teacher is the primary learning resource. The teachers direct and counsel the students, assist students having difficulty with the materials, maintain the organization of the learning center, and direct the activities of the teacher aides and the volunteer students. Enrollment in a skills lab is usually at the student's option.

Prekindergarten Programs Raise Achievement

According to an analysis of current research, prekindergarten programs have had significant short-term effects on raising the level of student achievement. Structured classes were effective in producing test score gains in areas such as language development for children under five years of age. While the gap was not closed with middle-class children, test scores for the majority of disadvantaged students showed improvement linked to prekindergarten experience.

Most of the studies ana-

lyzed concentrated on cognitive ability and school-oriented achievement. The report, *Summary of Research on Prekindergarten Programs*, includes data from 22 states and the District of Columbia. Migrant education and mobile classroom projects are covered, as well as programs for the mentally retarded and those with learning disabilities.

For further information: Educational Research Service, 1815 N. Ft. Myer Dr., Suite 1012, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

How To Handle Disaster

No matter where you live, you can expect to experience a natural or man-made disaster in your community during a normal lifetime! Idaho's Bureau of Disaster Services believes that schools have an obligation to prepare students for life as completely as possible. Accordingly, the Bureau has a complete course in how to handle a disaster. The course is called "Your Chance To Live."

The purpose of the materials, written for the secondary school level, is to prepare students to respond to any disaster in an intelligent, practical way—and possibly, to save their lives in the process. According to *News and Reports*, a publication of the Idaho State Department of Education, three key ideas underlie the organization of the course.

1. Appropriate response to disaster (beyond some basic safeguards) is determined by the characteristics of the disaster itself and by geographic, meteorologic, and political factors.

2. As a function of government, both state and local, the nation has a civil preparedness system designed to warn of approaching disasters and to assist individuals before, during, and after the disaster occurs.

3. Psychological factors often determine how well an individual handles disaster. A person who knows certain basic survival concepts is more apt to respond calmly and intelligently.

Materials for the course include a 27-minute film showing different approaches and techniques for teaching "Your Chance To Live," plus teacher and student manuals and audio-visual aids to support written materials. Accompanying films depict actual disasters and community responses to emergency situations.

Pre-Collegiate Anthropology

A recent publication deals with the inclusion of pre-collegiate anthropology in the curriculum. Anthropology is a relative newcomer to the school curriculum, but in recent years it has experienced a rapid growth in popularity in both ele-

mentary and secondary schools. *Pre-Collegiate Anthropology: Trends and Materials* provides information on identifying the materials, practices, and research related to the teaching of anthropology. In addition, there is an extensive section on "Tips for Teachers."

Thomas Dynneson, University of Texas of the Permian Basin, is the author.

For further information: Anthropology Curriculum Project, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

School Texts Assessed by Asia Society

Recently, the Asia Society completed a survey of the textbooks used in elementary and secondary instruction about Asia. The study was planned to assess the accuracy and underlying assumptions of the books and the degree to which they included literature and fine arts. The most serious fault discovered was the underlying Western orientation of books on Asia, and their failure to include any significant amount of cultural materials indicative of how Asians see the world and themselves. Therefore, these areas should be stressed by teachers in their classroom presentations. [E]

For further information: "Society Study Faults School Texts on Approach to Asia," *Asia Bulletin*, Volume II, No. 4, published by the Asia Society, 113 East 64th St., New York, New York 10021.

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