

News Notes

Robert C. McKean and Bob L. Taylor

Factors in Reading Achievement

The Rand Corporation conducted a six-month study of the School Preferred Reading Program in 20 elementary schools with minority enrollments in Los Angeles. This program encouraged local school communities to develop their own reading programs. Half of the 20 schools had predominantly black populations and the other half had predominantly Mexican American students. All of the schools showed substantial or consistent gains in reading since the School Preferred Reading Program was introduced in 1972.

For black pupils, six factors were identified as being associated with reading achievement:

1. A high level of parent-teacher contact;
2. Use of teaching materials keyed to individual student needs;
3. Flexibility of teachers in modifying and adopting instructional approaches;
4. Frequent informal consultations among teachers in implementing individual school reading programs;
5. Enhancing teacher morale to encourage feelings of effectiveness and confidence;
6. Maintaining a classroom free of disruption.

For Mexican American students, the Rand study found that research instruments failed to isolate similar specific factors; however, it was evident that individual school and classroom approaches made a difference. The average black pupil and the average Mexican American pupil made the same overall gains.

The report indicated that

proficiency in English at the beginning of the sixth grade so dominated a Mexican American pupil's ability to progress in reading English that more subtle factors relating to the program content, classroom atmosphere, teacher abilities, and school support were possibly overwhelmed.

Other factors identified in the report were: (a) principals at the involved schools showed a marked ability to discern successful teaching approaches, and (b) novel approaches, such as open classrooms and team teaching, had no systematic relationship to reading progress.

Educational Needs of the Northwest

A survey conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory included teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board chairpersons. A total of 1,686 people from Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington were surveyed. It was learned that:

1. Gifted children are the top-priority group whose needs are not being met. They are followed by low-ability students, dropouts, preschoolers, kindergarten students, and ethnic groups.
2. The primary administrative and management function needing improvement is evaluation (of both programs and staff), followed by finance, student discipline, grading, and graduation requirements.
3. The curriculum area most in need of improvement or expansion is reading followed by math and career education.
4. Student motivation is

the instructional concern most needing improvement, followed by accelerated and enrichment activities, individualized instruction, and alternative programs.

Motorhome Is Classroom on the Move

Rusty and Dave Swingle offer a unique summer educational experience to high school juniors and seniors. Arthur Green, writing in a recent issue of *Motorhome Life and Camper Coachman*, describes the Swingles' Centennial School, which utilizes a converted school bus-motorhome in a six-week summer activity in Montana.

Rusty teaches fifth grade in Nova Albion School in San Rafael, California, and both Rusty and Dave taught previously in Dryden, Michigan. The two have applied their talents in developing this self-governing school, which takes teenagers from California to Montana for a summer experience.

Recently the Centennial School was able to rent a dorm at Montana State University for a nominal fee, plus the promise to do some painting and other repairs. The motorhome brought the students and instructors to Montana. It enabled them to take side-trips to Butte, to the Craters of the Moon National Monument in Idaho, and to the Lewis and Clark Caverns. The vehicle served as headquarters when they made 3- or 4-day backpacking trips and provided a base while they spent several days in Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons on the way back to California.

During their stay in Bozeman, the group members undertook a community project that included the completion of 4,000

feet of nature trail with two bridges, a motorcycle barricade, nine benches, an amphitheater, a glass-covered information booth, and signs along the trail. Total cost of the activity—4,000 miles of travel, food, and lodging for six weeks; tickets; entrance fees; and other expenses—was only \$150 for each person.

Workshop Voice for Students

A team of students at Centaurus High School, Lafayette, Colorado, is providing a voice for students by means of a workshop format wherein students can express concerns and offer suggestions about classes and other aspects of the school. Known as SEA-POD (Students Encouraging Action through Participating Option Development), the team was formed in the spring of 1975 in a business management class taught by Peggy Kline. It now works with a faculty team and a district staff group to involve students in improving education.

The team's first project was a survey of all students on class attendance. That study led to the first workshop, which dealt with proposed student guidelines. Three workshops were held during the 1975-76 school year. For each workshop, the SEA-POD members select approximately 45 students randomly from all grade levels. Team members lead small discussion groups in which students are encouraged to express their complaints, concerns, suggestions, and recommendations about any aspect of the school.

Workshop results are discussed by team members with Centaurus administrators, counselors, and department heads. Students in one workshop identified a need for accurate information to dispel rumors and inform students of developments at the school. In response *Hotline*, an occasional newsletter with articles on classes, facilities, and other matters of interest to students, was published. Many articles provide answers to questions placed in the student suggestion box,

which was started by the SEA-POD team.

For information about the SEA-POD development, contact: Peggy Kline, Centaurus High School, 10300 South Boulder Road, Lafayette, Colorado.

Making Goals Work for Us

"I've observed that sometimes goals work against us when: There are too many goals. They have no priority. There is no plan for implementation. We overuse the phrase, 'After all, goals are not measurable.' And obviously that's not what we want." Thus writes Charles Blondino in *Context and Conflict*, published by the Washington State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Actually, there are some other perceptions that can help us move more confidently in working with goals:

1. We ought to view goals as statements of personal commitment. Goal setting has its

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (Signed) JOHN H. BRALOVE, Business Manager.

most significant impact when it is personalized—when we set goals for ourselves both individually and collectively and when we assess our movement toward them.

2. We need to use goals to show we care for others. Why do we wish to involve staffs in a goals development project? We must avoid substituting coercion for clarification if we wish to develop enthusiasm for goals and their outcomes.

3. We ought to help others to visualize life with goals. A key element is visualizing precisely what it is you wish to become and how you will behave after the goal has been reached. Visualizing gives a taste of the future; we ought to role play it, talk it up, get the feel of it.

Supervision in Tennessee

Supervision is alive in Tennessee but in some respects it is not as well as it ought to be. James O. Huffman reported the results of a study of the effectiveness of supervisory programs as they affect social studies in-

struction in selected Tennessee school systems in *The TASCD 76 Journal* published by the Tennessee ASCD.

Huffman found that supervisory programs were most effective in providing a climate conducive to creative endeavor, and teacher endeavor, and in respecting the individuality of classroom teachers. Most participants in the study felt that supervisors coordinated improvements rather than imposing their own plans of action. Supervisory activity was directed toward the improvement of instruction as its supreme purpose. Moreover, numerous comments indicated that teachers are actually desirous of supervisory assistance and are concerned because they don't receive enough help.

"The school principal was recognized more often as engaging in supervisory behavior than any other school system personnel." However, "most principals who participated in the study indicated that they spent approximately two hours per day on instructional supervision." A wide range of personnel in the schools engaged in supervision. Assistant princi-

pals, guidance workers, department heads, teachers, coordinators of instruction, curriculum directors, assistant superintendents, and superintendents were listed. It was concluded that in these school districts a variety of educational workers can and do supervise.

Classroom visitation, observation, and conferencing for the purpose of cooperatively analyzing classroom behavior were perceived as the least effective supervisory practices. Classroom visitation on a regular basis "is not a reality in the school systems involved in the study." Comments documented the haphazard nature of classroom visitation, the prevalence of the "surprise" visit, and the neglect of the follow-up conference in all too many cases. Evaluation of the supervisory program and funding of instructional supervision were other weaknesses. Data also showed that supervisory personnel tend to be saddled with mundane duties that have little or no relationship to instructional improvement such as: completing and filing reports, and ordering and delivering materials. [E]

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