

# News Notes

by Robert C. McKean and Bob L. Taylor

## Washington Small School Curriculum Task Force Developed

Nine small school districts in the state of Washington have formed a Task Force to develop curriculum for the primary grades. Responding to a challenge posed by the staff of the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Lake Stevens School District prepared the basic proposal which includes Arlington, Darrington, Granite Falls, Lakewood, Monroe, South Whidbey, Stanwood, Sultan, and Monroe Christian Schools.

According to *Your Public Schools*, the first phase will focus on planning related to knowledges, skills, and attitudes objectives in social studies, reading, math, science, and language arts arranged K-3. In addition, objectives in environmental education, minority education, and career awareness will be included as much as possible. Subsequent arrangements through professional organizations and volunteer school districts will cover other areas of study such as music and physical education. The format provides for the identification of learning activities which contribute to each goal, monitoring procedures used to measure the achievement as well as appropriate resource materials.

The completed package will be in loose leaf form to facilitate easy arrangement of sequences of instruction. Classroom teachers will have many options which they may utilize as needed. The format invites any teacher or faculty group in Washington to make a contribution by simply mailing the contribution to the state superintendent's office where it will be printed and mailed to all schools using the guideline curriculum.

For further information, write to: Bob Groeschell, Director of Program Development, Office of the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Old Capitol Building, Olympia, Washington 98504.

## Experiment in Small Group Instruction

Because of the large number of children in need of behavioral counseling, classroom teachers should be able to handle mild behavioral problems short of referral to clinics. This was the premise of a recent study of behavioral problems in the Kansas City, Missouri, schools. This approach held that small group instruction might produce learning conditions in the classroom that would be more healthful emotionally for all children.

Sixty, sixth-grade teachers were selected from the Kansas City, Missouri, School District and divided into an experimental and a control group. Teachers in the experimental group received summer training in small group interaction based on ideas from education, sociology, group dynamics, psychology, and psychotherapy. Themes of the program were the exploration of feelings, the use of small groups as a vehicle for social and academic motivation, and the recognition of social differences. Following the two-week session, teachers continued to meet through the year to discuss relevant problems and techniques.

Students liked the small groups. Teachers were in the role of resource persons rather than authority figures. Students had more opportunities for verbal expression and felt that they had a

better understanding of themselves and others. Children found support from each other and they valued the opportunities to lead. The problem investigated was, "Did the year of small group teaching develop coping skills which would reduce behavioral problems in the future?"

From the 3,600 students involved in the small group experiment, two groups of inner-city, mostly black youngsters were selected for a five-year follow-up study. Initially, school records and juvenile court and police files were checked to measure the prevalence of discipline and adjustment problems. A delinquency rate table was devised to show all information collected on problem behavior over the five years following the experiment.

Over the five-year period, the number of students in the experimental group reported as having some difficulty increased from 113 to 160, but in the control group the number increased from 79 to 198. Initially, 60 percent of the sixth-grade students in trouble were in the experimental group, but after five years the percentage had fallen to 45 percent.

The positive impact of the one year of small group teaching was found in every category of the study. There was reduced absenteeism, better classroom ratings from teachers, and fewer scrapes with the law than would have been expected. By the fifth year, the effect seemed to be wearing off, and this suggested the need to repeat the small group instruction in the tenth grade. Certainly the approach is within the reach of most school districts since it does not require any new hardware or additional personnel. More information about this study may be

received by writing the Department of Human Ecology and Community Health, University of Kansas Medical Center, Rainbow Boulevard at 39th Street, Kansas City, KS 60103.

### Radiation Hazard Possible in School Gyms

The Food and Drug Administration has notified all state radiation control agencies of a potential radiation hazard that exists in many schools throughout the nation. School gymnasiums often use high intensity mercury vapor discharge lamps for illumination. Under normal conditions, there is no harmful radiation from these lamps; however, if the outer glass globe is broken, anyone beneath the lamp is exposed to unfiltered ultraviolet radiation. This kind of lamp can function for up to 1,000 hours after the outer bulb has been broken. Cases of eye irritation and severe sunburn have been reported in schools where this situation has occurred. As with ordinary sunburn, the symptoms and discomfort disappear after a few days and have no apparent lasting effect.

Maintenance personnel, teachers, aides, and administrators in schools where these lamps are being used should be alert to the problem and watch for signs of lamp failure. Routine visual checks should be made for broken lamps, and the broken lamps should be replaced.

### Reading Skills Improve for 9-year-olds

The 1975 National Assessment survey found that 9-year-olds had improved their reading skills over their 1971 performance. The strongest single group improvement was among blacks in this age group, but white children still had a higher overall reading level. Other results were:

1. The reading performance of 13- and 17-year-olds changed little over the four-year period.

2. Girls continued to read better than boys at all age levels.

3. Nine-year-olds from the Southeast showed significant improvement in reading skill, but they were still below the national level.

4. Children from affluent urban areas continued to perform above national levels, with those from low-income urban areas falling below.

There was improvement in the 1975 scores both for children whose parents graduated from high school but had no additional education and for those whose parents had no high school education. Nevertheless, these 9-year-olds were still below the national level.

While students from the Southeast, from low-income urban areas, who were black or whose parents had limited education continued to achieve below the national level, these gaps are starting to close in the case of the 9-year-olds. Here is evidence that the special reading programs at the elementary level are paying off.

*Reading in America: A Perspective on Two Assessments* (NAEP report #06-R-01) will be available soon from the U.S. Government Printing Office.

### PICKELS—A Hawaiian Citizenship Practicum

PICKELS stands for Practicum in Citizenship at Kaneohe Elementary School and, according to *Na Lono Kula* published by the Hawaiian Department of Education, is "an example of the reaffirmation by parents and staff that the school shall provide meaningful, firsthand experiences in school and community affairs." This practicum has become an integral part of the school curriculum and every student, K-6, is involved in some way.

Activities include a student council composed of K-6 students. A buddy system is used so that older students assist the younger ones. Ten committees make up the program, headed by students and

advised by teachers who plan and implement activities such as Can-O-Gram, Haunted House, Campus Beautification, Flea Market, and Intramurals. Special interest classes are selected by the pupils and taught by resource persons from the community, parents, and teachers; these include such areas as coconut weaving, lei making, leathercraft, cooking, Hawaiian games, and Japanese.

The program is scheduled into four phases coinciding with each quarter. Each phase consists of four 60-minute sessions scheduled on four consecutive Wednesdays. Other Wednesdays are used for meetings and planning sessions. Students not involved in meetings or planning sessions participate in grade level activities conducted by teachers who are not serving as committee or planning advisors.

### Team Teaching: You Must Try Harder!

A Stanford research team found that team teaching works for teachers who try harder, but not enough really do. Frequently teachers go into team teaching without adequate preparation. Soon they are finding the experience frustrating, and they become angry. They withdraw to their own classroom attributing their lack of success to personality clashes. Some rules for making teaming work are:

1. Criticism should be offered only when you have a better idea.
2. Keep all criticism in the team.
3. Rotate team leaders.
4. Prior to teaming, visit schools where it is working.
5. Choose your own teammates.
6. Teammates should not be selected just because they are friends.
7. Teammates should be selected for complementary competencies.

"How to Succeed in Team Teaching—By Really Trying," is Occasional Paper #13 published

by the Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching, School of Education, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

### Colorado Employers Favor Adult Education

The Colorado Adult Needs Assessment, as reported in a recent issue of *Education Colorado*, sought to secure data on (a) adult occupational, educational, and related needs; (b) business and industry's requirements and perceptions about adult needs; and (c) agency services available to adults. Accordingly three separate survey thrusts resulted in more than 6,000 adult citizens, 500 employers, and 400 public agencies being included in the study.

"The probe into the attitudes and needs of the people of Colorado toward adult education programs shows a strong latent desire for further learning experiences and a serious attitude toward adult education." Some of the results included the following:

Adults tend to view the prime motivation for participation as "becoming a better informed person."

They favor nearby public school buildings as the location where programs should be offered.

They lack information as to existing programs and their quality.

A certificate or diploma at

the completion of a program has universal appeal.

A preference was expressed for programs that are held in the early evening and for a period of time not exceeding three months.

Employers indicated a wide array of needs for adult education not now being provided; most frequently mentioned were:

Commercial and distribution education;

Vocational and technical education;

Personal improvement classes;

General academic education;

Safety and driver education;

Civic and public affairs education.

The consensus was that "employees' opportunities for advancement would improve significantly with further special skills training and vocational training." However, the survey indicated a substantial reluctance on the part of employers to offer or pay for employee learning programs although the majority felt that community colleges and vocational education schools should provide them.

Agencies report considerable effort expended in seeking to serve the needs of adults and a frustration in doing so. The survey showed a marked weakness in recruitment for enrollment thrust as well as the lack of provision for adequate public information about

existing services. "Primary clientele recruitment is through referrals by other agencies, other clients, or the public at large." Agency funding sources appear to be primarily government, closely followed by public support (fund drives, fees, private individuals) with organizational support (foundations, unions, business/industry) being comparatively minimal.

### Occupational Instructional Materials Field-Tested

Individualized instructional materials for ten occupational areas have been field tested in vocational classrooms across the state of Kentucky. The materials were developed at the University of Kentucky's Curriculum Development Center in Lexington as part of their move toward competency-based curriculum in vocational education.

According to *Ed News*, published by the Kentucky Department of Education, the occupational areas include: bank teller; secretarial; machinist; cashier-checker; dental auxiliary; carpentry; food preparation; child care; auto body, and tractor mechanics. For further information on the individualized instructional materials, contact Bruce Carpenter, Assistant Director, Curriculum Development Center, College of Education, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40506.

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