

# News Notes

by Robert C. McKean and Bob L. Taylor

## Foreign Language Studies Travel Programs

Spend an afternoon exploring ancient Indian ruins or riding giant turtles off the coast of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Students from the Jefferson County Schools, Colorado, did this last Spring. Once or twice a year, students reaching an acceptable level of foreign language proficiency are eligible to take a trip with faculty sponsors to a foreign country, where they mingle with the inhabitants; learn about the culture; study the history, architecture and art; and further develop their language skills.

This spring, there will be 16-day trips to Spain and France, where the students will spend part of their stay living with non-English-speaking families. These foreign trips help students understand foreign culture and language.

For students unable to travel abroad, several times each year groups of students are bused to Wild Basin Lodge in the Rocky Mountains for a weekend devoted to a preselected foreign culture. Prior to the students' arrival, the lodge area is organized as a foreign village, where no one is admitted without passport or appropriate papers. The village features native dress, shops, meals, entertainment, and government organization. Participating students must conduct all activities in the native language. Both the trips abroad and the weekend retreats are self-supporting through student assessments.

Other activities of the Foreign Language Program include films in foreign languages, special dances, parties, and festivals. To each event, native-speaking resi-

dents are invited to participate and talk with the students. Foreign language enrollment has remained steady over the past several years in the Jefferson County School District.

## Third Graders Produce Film on the Future

Martha Valukas and Cheri Bludau supervised their third-grade classes in the production of an animated film entitled "When I Grow Up." According to an article in *TPS News*, published by the Tucson Public Schools, this six-month experience "instilled in us absolute confidence in the future and these children."

The basic purpose of the film was to show the types of jobs that may be needed by the year 2075. Valukas says, "Gosh, if anybody would be interested in the third century, it would be the children who will be living and working at that time. At first, I thought about assigning essays on the subject, but the idea lay dormant until the suggestion was made of creating an animated film."

The two teachers received assistance from the Pima County Development Career Guidance Project for "a 15-minute silent 16mm movie depicting the world of work in the year 2075." When it was realized that the original proposal did not provide for the necessary film editing expenses, officials at KGUN-TV, Channel 9, offered to help edit the film and to provide facilities for the class. "The entire production—from the title to the script and all major decisions—was made by the 55 students themselves."

During the preliminary stage, the class brainstormed about the next 100 years, the importance of their role in the future of the nation and prepared reports on an occupation of interest to them. Committees then planned and developed an animated enactment of the occupations that had been discussed in class.

The final production was only 13 minutes long, but each 90-second unit in the film took one day to complete. According to Bludau, "Additional expenses to the school district totaled \$35.00, but when filmmakers estimate it requires over \$1,000 per second to film a commercial today, I think we got this production at a real bargain."

"It contains a subtle message," concludes Valukas, "Be gentle with the future and the environment because we need a place to live."

## Parent Education

A "life cycle" approach to parent education has been developed by the Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools' Adult Education Department. The aim of this program, according to Debra Whitcomb in an article in *Learning* magazine, is "To assuage the fears and bolster the spirits of struggling families." Course titles include a variety of offerings such as: "When Parents Remarry," "Parents of Adopted Children," "Family Communications," "Parent-Infant Development," and "Parent-Child Development."

Parent education specialist Patricia Edminster believes that parent education courses are an

ideal setting in which concerned parents may share experiences and discuss problems. The classes are taught by early childhood parent education instructors. A small (\$5) materials fee, in addition to the \$30 tuition charge, provides classroom materials and a nutritional snack (also used as a learning experience).

In addition to helping parents explore alternatives as a basis for making the best possible decision in solving their problems, the courses seek to get parents involved with the school system as early as possible. In this way, the resources of the schools are offered to citizens who may need them.

Inquiries may be directed to Patricia Edminster, Montgomery County Public Schools, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850.

### Standardizing Composition Grading

After the Gary, Indiana, school system set up minimum competence in composition as a graduation requirement, 60 teachers became involved in a course for grading compositions. Problems identified were: (a) standardizing the grading; (b) doing it fast; and (c) identifying areas in which students needed help.

During three, all-day sessions, the teachers shared their reactions to a collection of compositions taken from 8,000 written by Gary students. After agreeing on the best and worst of the essays, the teachers took on the reading assignment. They read quickly, getting an overall effect. Those they agreed were outstanding needed no further attention. Those that needed more analysis got another reading for grammar, style, and organization. In cases where one teacher passed a composition and another failed it, a third reader was used. Compositions that failed outright received a detailed analysis to show the students and their teachers where they needed more instruction. While the teachers were initially leery of setting a standard that would deny students

a diploma, they did find themselves basically in agreement.

If you wish more information on this, contact Theodore Storlie, Educational Testing Service, 960 Grove Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201.

### Production Line in the First Grade

Line production is an organizational process by which work is planned so it gets done in the most efficient way. Work is organized down to the last detail, and the well-thought-out plan works the best. There is no waste motion or effort. Grace Muente asked, "How can I employ the line production method in my first grade Mt. Baker classroom (Whatcom County, Washington)?" To introduce the line process to her students, she discussed the problems of assembling an automobile. This helped first graders to understand the problems of line production by breaking the car into parts, the parts equaling jobs as performed by individual workers.

The class decided to use a production line in feeding parents after the spring musical. The food was to be cookies. Oatmeal cookies were chosen, and the process of cookie-making was broken down into parts.

Each child had a certain job. Following several practice runs of "pretend" ingredients, the actual assembly line was put into operation. According to the article in *Your Public Schools*, published by the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the organization paid off—the cookies were edible.

Grace Muente's objectives were as follows:

1. All students will participate in a line production to make cookies.

2. The students will be able to measure, using a cup, a teaspoon, and a half teaspoon.

3. The students will be able to level off a cup and a teaspoon of the recipe ingredients.

4. The students will be able to read and follow the recipe.

5. The students will demonstrate their ability to read package labels.

6. The students will demonstrate their ability to stir the batter and put small shapes onto the cookie sheet.

7. The pupils will interact and both take and give suggestions to solve any problem that comes up. (The production line can be stopped to work out a problem, such as one pupil trying to do all the stirring.)

### Mini-Projects Improve Innovation and Experimentation in the Classroom

Since 1972, the New York State Education Department has offered a Mini-Project Program aimed at giving school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other concerned individuals or community groups at the "grass-roots" level an opportunity to have some of their innovative teaching ideas put into practice. According to *Inside Education*, the program is intended to fund small-scale projects—projects costing less than \$3,000—in order to stimulate innovation and experimentation in the classroom.

The Mini-Project seeks to fulfill four main purposes:

1. To enable individuals or groups to obtain relatively small amounts of money to test, study, develop, and implement promising educational approaches to educational problems;

2. To stimulate creative solutions to specific local problems;

3. To support projects that involve combinations of subject areas, educational levels, and students in pursuit of replicable improvement in education;

4. To encourage fresh approaches to the teaching of regular school subjects that concern the school district as a whole or a substantial portion of the school population.

Included among the 1,000-plus school district projects that have been funded are a junior high school fire survival training program in Buffalo, a Plattsburgh plan to broaden the self-concepts of five-year-old students, an elementary-level project to approach reading through an interdisciplinary emphasis in the Ramapo Central District, and a junior high Colonial crafts program in Three Village School Districts in Suffolk County. Further information may be secured by writing Robert G. Kelly, Mini-Project Coordinator, State Education Department, Albany, New York 12234.

### **Australia-U.S. Teacher Exchange**

Three Arizona teachers will exchange homes, jobs, and lifestyles with three Australian teachers in cooperation with the Australian government's International Teacher Fellowship Program. The objective of the program is to promote an international sharing experience for teachers.

The teachers are closely matched for exchange and are placed in a new world of personal and professional experiences. Teachers who have already been on the Australian exchange advise the new exchange teachers about such things as cost of groceries, differences in teaching methods, travel, and language variances.

The program is planned so exchange teachers live in each others' homes and accept their counterpart's teaching responsibilities, but each teacher is paid a regular salary by the individual's own school. The exchange is for one calendar year, and participants must pay their own transportation costs.

Since being selected, the Arizona teachers have been corresponding with their Australian counterparts. They have shared photographs, lists of household appliances, and general information about their schools, towns, and countries. Probably, they will have no face-to-face contact with their counterparts. The Arizona teachers

were selected from approximately 100 applicants. The Australian government screened the applicants and matched the teachers to help the instructors and families make a smooth transition into their new environments. For information about the program, contact Mrs. L'Ecuyer, Arizona Department of Education, 1535 West Jefferson, Phoenix, Arizona 85007.

### **Order in Schools?**

A number of states are dealing with the issues of violence and vandalism in schools. The Massachusetts Teachers Association has appointed a task force on violence that will hold six regional meetings during the spring to gather teacher recommendations concerning violence in the schools. The task force chairman indicated that reporting violence is an effective way of dealing with it.

Also, legislation is being considered on these issues. In Vermont, a bill would specify the measures that school districts could use to maintain discipline. Missouri is considering a bill that would provide a penalty for any person who willfully injures, destroys, or orders to be destroyed school buildings, furniture, fixtures, or apparatus. In Michigan, a bill is being considered specifying parental responsibility in juvenile cases.

Recently, discrepancies in how students are disciplined were pointed out by the Pennsylvania State Education Association. It was noted that one district in the state suspends students from five to ten days for attacks on teachers, but attacks on principals draw an "expelled indefinitely or forever" sentence.

### **What Can You Copy?**

Recently the federal copyright law was revised, and it is now more specific about what teachers can and cannot copy. You can make a single copy of a chapter from a book, an article from a journal, a short story, essay or poem, a chart, graph, or a diagram for research or class preparation.

In addition, you can make multiple copies (one per pupil) if copying meets the tests of brevity and spontaneity, and carries a notice of copyright.

Under the test for brevity, you are limited to copying a complete poem of less than 250 words, a complete article or essay of less than 2,500 words, and excerpts from any work of not over 1,000 words or 10 percent of the work, whichever is less. You can copy one chart, diagram, or other illustration per book or periodical, and two pages or 10 percent of short special works.

Under the test for spontaneity, you can copy the work if waiting for a reply to a request for permission prohibits the teacher from using the material at the time it is needed in your lesson. Obviously, you cannot go on copying something year after year under this provision.

Finally, you cannot copy to replace or create anthologies, photocopy consumable works, or copy as a substitute for buying books.

### **Did Congress Make a Mistake?**

Under the new Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which becomes effective next October, schools must draw up and revise annually an individual tailored program for each handicapped child in order to qualify for Federal funds. The Individual Education Program must be drawn up by a team including a representative of the local education agency, a teacher, a parent, and the child, when that is appropriate. The plan should identify the child's level of performance, annual goals including short term instructional objectives, specific educational services needed, and evaluation procedures.

Officials of HEW have questioned if Congress did not make a mistake in requiring a written individualized education program for each handicapped child. While the individualized program undoubtedly would have value, it is questionable if Congress can mandate the separate states to use specific teaching strategies.

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