

News Notes

by Robert C. McKean and Bob L. Taylor

Back to the Basics: Let's Take Another Look

A clear curriculum trend across the United States is toward "back-to-the-basics." This movement has been fueled by strong opinions from parents, businessmen, school boards, and a significant proportion of professional educators as well. The decline of scores on standardized achievement tests in the areas of basic skills since the early 1960s seemed to be the trigger for this development.

Greg Stefanich, writing in *The Iowa Curriculum Bulletin* co-sponsored by the Iowa Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the University of Northern Iowa, has been growing more and more uncomfortable with the developments. He says, "I feel the disciples of the movement have totally overlooked the fundamental influences which have prompted the decadence of basic skills and have identified their scapegoat as the agency probably least responsible for the decline, namely, the educational institutions of our country."

Some of the pieces include a television set in nearly every home, working mothers, overloaded classrooms, and a changed model for our children. "Most significantly, I contend that our educational system has not eroded, it has simply undergone a transition directed by our American society," said Stefanich. "Our schools, which formerly focused almost entirely on the academic needs of the children, have been burdened with providing for the social, physical, and emo-

tional needs of our youth." The federal government, state government, state departments of education, community action groups, and others forces are continually working to force schools to cram more and more into an already overburdened curriculum. "The back-to-basics advocates have failed to look at the question, 'If the schools don't, who will?'"

One must recognize that the schools are enrolling a much broader spectrum of students today. "There are many socioeconomically disadvantaged, emotionally disturbed, and learning disabled students who presently remain in school that were formerly early dropouts or non-attenders." Couple this with the fact that many older people tend to have an overly rosy picture of the past and hold unreasonable expectations for the present and the pressures for back-to-basics emerge.

Stefanich asserts, "We have made great strides in the essence of the educational process, which resides in the relationships between the students and their teachers. . . . It would be unfortunate to redirect the major efforts of teachers to that of being dispensers of information."

Indiana Citizen Expectations of Education

Results of a 1975-76 survey of Hoosier citizen perceptions of the public school system have been released in a recent issue of the *Educator's Edition*, a publication of the Indiana Department of Public In-

struction. It is pointed out that the responses represent the opinions of those citizens most interested in education and Indiana schools since the survey received a 22 percent return out of a random sample of 15,000 names. However, the Indiana Department of Public Instruction was able to identify objectives that interested taxpayers see as most important for a quality education.

Public concern over a firmer, even narrower definition of the contemporary school is one theme that appeared. A majority of respondents indicated a need for improvement in the most traditional areas of school curriculum such as basic skills, as well as instruction that leads to the development of traditional values.

Public opinions suggest that both preschool education and adult education in general should not become priority items at the expense of kindergarten through twelfth-grade programming. When special programs are necessary, greatest emphasis should be placed on meeting minimum needs of fast learners, slow learners, and the handicapped.

From the survey, it seems that the more visible to the public an activity becomes, the more likely the public will judge that the schools are performing adequately in that area. For example, activities often in the public eye—from athletics or accelerated academic programming to art, music, and dramatics—tend to be judged by the public as more successful school accomplishments than intensive and often personalized activities,

such as guidance and counseling services. This suggests that educators need to spend more time in informing the public about standard educational programs.

Public opinion also indicated that programs most in need of improvement are those dealing with the teaching of traditional values, money management skills, and understanding other people.

Individual copies of the survey results may be available from Harold H. Negley, Superintendent, Indiana Department of Public Instruction, Room 227, State House, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.

Cultural Heterogeneity

One view of curriculum today asserts that we must reject the assumption that the school should be an institutional device for achievement of cultural homogeneity. Warren H. Burton, writing in *Context and Conflict* published by the Washington State A5CD, articulates this position.

"The multicultural reality of American Life and history should be a part of every school's curriculum," says Burton. Many educators have thought of the United States as a culturally homogeneous nation and have assumed that minority groups must conform in order to compete successfully in our American society. As a result, according to Burton, "The various racial-cultural minorities have been guinea pigs for experiments in monocultural, monolingual, vacuum ideology, and compensatory education for a lengthy period of time."

"The multicultural reality of American life and history should be a part of every school's curriculum." Burton suggests the following recommended corrective actions.

1. Freedom, tolerance, and cosmopolitanism must be exhibited by school district employees as an example for the children, youth, and adults of the communities served.

2. Each school must be responsive to the needs and interests of all the students that it serves.

3. All segments of the population should have a voice in policy making and educational planning.

4. The school must replace irrelevant attacks upon the cultural values of minority groups with concentration on essential learning.

5. The school must recognize and utilize the cultural assets of the values of minority groups.

6. The curricula of our schools should vary from region to region in order to reflect the rich diversity of American life.

7. Bilingualism should be regarded as not merely an asset, but as a necessity in the twentieth century; all pupils should be expected to master at least two languages in the elementary grades.

8. All teachers and administrators should be required to receive training of an anthropological-sociological nature and be expected to possess or acquire the linguistic skills necessary for communication with local students and their parents.

Flight Museum Works With Schools

Puget Sound area teachers have an exciting resource to help them teach aerospace education. According to *Your Public Schools*, published by the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Red Barn Air Park's Museum of Flight in Seattle has pledged to "teach a unit with you" in aviation, space exploration, aerodynamics, the history of flight, rocketry, air traffic control, or other related topics.

The museum is located on the Seattle Center grounds and is a project of the Pacific Northwest Aviation Historical Foundation. Its facilities are tailored to provide a real learning experience for school and college students. Museum-directed enrichment lessons are available in relation to a number of facets of aviation, aerospace, or space flight.

Some of the museum's most unique activities center around exhibits that are to be touched, han-

dled, and operated by the students. For example, there are the "talking pilot-puppets" who can be programmed to explain the intricacies of a number of aviation topics; an actual USAF F-5 jet fighter with an open cockpit for visitors to sit in; a full-size Boeing Space Flight Simulator; a 727 passenger cabin mock-up; and a floor-size airport runway pattern with a small control tower for lessons in airport traffic control management.

Information on the museum and its programs or on how to set up such a facility may be secured from Education Coordinator, Museum of Flight, 400 Broad Street, Seattle, Washington 98109.

Math on Microfiche for Elementary Students

Third graders in some schools are learning to use microfiche readers so that their math skills can be more readily diagnosed. Developed by ETS and marketed by Eastman Kodak, Diagnosing Individual Competence on Microfiche (DICOM) is a math testing program that has the additional feature of appealing to students' interest in mechanical devices that they can operate on their own.

The process involves a kind of programming. The teacher gives a student a 4" by 6" sheet of microfilm containing math questions dealing with a concept already introduced in the classroom. At the microfiche reader, the child works from frame to frame, answering each question by selecting from three of four options.

Depending on the chosen answer, the child is directed to the most appropriate of several frames. If responses are correct, increasingly more difficult sets of questions are presented. An incorrect answer results in another question of the same difficulty; another incorrect answer causes the student to be directed to special questions that must be answered in writing.

The teacher uses this information to determine the child's mastery level. A written sample is reviewed for confirmation of the test

results. In this way, the student avoids spending needless time working on problems that he or she cannot solve, and the teacher may identify the concepts that need to be reinforced.

For further information, contact Matthew Sherman, ETS, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

Sex Education Today?

Parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members worry about sex education today. Bond issues are lost because of it; superintendents' heads roll because of it. All sorts of information and misinformation surround the issue. Sol Gordon, in an address excerpted in a recent issue of the *APA Monitor*, has some sharply worded things to say about it from his perspective as the Director of the Institute for Family Research and Education at Syracuse University.

He points out that last year there were one million pregnancies among teenagers under 19 years of age. Three million new cases of venereal disease, two-thirds of them among young people under 24 years of age. Sixty percent of all youth in high school today will have had sex before they finish high school. "And people are saying, 'If you tell kids about sex, they'll do it.' They're doing it!"

"They say young people are knowledgeable and that is not true." Television doesn't provide sex education. "There's a lot of anti-sex around, not sex." Some have blamed promiscuity in this day and age on the Pill. Gordon says, "Less than 30 percent of sexually active teenagers are on any form of contraception. If only they would use the Pill, we wouldn't be in so much trouble." He continues, "Somehow or other we're going to have to say to young people, 'If you want to have sex, you're having it without my consent, but if you're going to have it anyway, use birth control.'"

We especially need to help girls become less available for exploitation, feel more adequate and

good about themselves. "The boys have had 5,000 years of practice using lines, and we need to help the girls catch up. Of course sex shouldn't be a game. We know that, but in the meantime, it's only the girls who get pregnant."

Education must prepare youth for a different kind of family in the future. "Tomorrow's family will be a man and a woman—both of them equal in education, both of them equal in opportunity, both of them employed at some time or other." The family will be egalitarian, not the traditional family of the past. "The family isn't dead, marriages aren't dead, but the inequality is dead. Not talking to or communicating with young people, that's dead. We have to prepare young people for equal roles. And we have to be able to prepare young people to understand something about their sexuality."

Some Curriculum Resources

Key Notes, published by the Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Bureau of Curriculum Services, Massachusetts Department of Education, points out items of interest to curriculum workers. A few of those included in a recent issue illustrate the range of resources introduced to interested educators.

The Student Consumer's Handbook is a 71-page booklet published by the Division of Occupational Education of the Massachusetts Department of Education. It is dedicated to helping the student who is shopping for a private career school find the one best suited to his/her needs. The booklet discusses the values of career education and helps the reader think through career decisions carefully. Included in the booklet are sample contracts, shrewd consumer tips, and a comprehensive directory of all Massachusetts licensed career schools. For information about the *Handbook*, write *Key Notes*, Department of Education, 31 St. James Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02116.

Students Sociology Dictionary was compiled by a school librarian who had been unable to find easily comprehensible social studies materials for use with junior and senior high school students. According to *Key Notes*, the publication "has been tested successfully in three Massachusetts school systems." For a \$4.50 copy, order from Mara Press, 22 Green Street, Marblehead, Massachusetts 01945.

Expanding Alternatives in Career Guidance is a directory designed to assist guidance teachers in analyzing, categorizing, and updating sources of career, occupational, and educational information. The publication was developed by the Office of Career Guidance, Department of Education, and includes sections on current literature available on career guidance, lists of resources, and offers methods for using a computerized data base to secure career information and decision making. Send inquiries to *Key Notes*, Department of Education, 31 St. James Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02116.

Multi-ethnic and Sex-fair Resource Materials is an annotated bibliography listing curriculum materials, filmstrips, kits, and videotapes of a sex-fair, multiethnic variety. Books and handbooks to promote sex-fair education are also reviewed. Write *Key Notes* for information about this guide.

A Resource Guide to Outdoor Education in New England describes more than 200 organizations throughout New England that offer services and programs in the out-of-doors. Aimed primarily at teachers and youth leaders, the information in this guide has many uses for the professional outdoor educator. Copies are available for \$5.00 (plus 50¢ postage) from the Appalachian Mountain Club, 5 Joy Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108.

Currently there is a series of four booklets produced by the Massachusetts Department of Education offering some solutions on energy conservation that individuals and schools can readily imple-

ment. The publications are: *Energy Conservation in School Facilities*, *District Level Plan for Conservation*, *Energy Conservation in the School Curriculum*, and *Energy Conservation in School Transportation Systems*. Send inquiries to Judith Dortz, GBREC, 54 Rindge Avenue Extension, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140.

Coast Lines is a monthly newsletter dealing with water resources and water uses. It is published by the Coastal Zone Management. Contact Mark Kaufman, Coastal Zone Management, Office of Environmental Affairs, 100 Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

Massachusetts Right to Read Publications is an annotated listing of all current Right to Read materials generated by the Massachusetts Right to Read Effort. For information, write to Massachusetts Right to Read Effort, Room 613, Statler Office Bldg., 20 Providence Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116.

Core Course on the "Contemporary Person"

Black power, Watergate, women's lib, genetic manipulation, and the future of society are examined in a core course taught at St. Teresa's Academy in Kansas City, Missouri. According to an article in *The Core Teacher*, published by the National Association for Core

Curriculum, Inc., the course is described as "an interdisciplinary course offered to juniors and seniors for one semester. Students receive one-half credit in Religion, one-half credit in Social Studies, and one-half credit in English, and are team taught by members of these departments."

Some of the subject matter included are:

A. The Tragic Hero

1. Watergate: A Personal or National Tragedy?

2. Elements of Obedience in Society: Milgram Experiment

3. "Loser Peoples" vs. "Loser Nations": Bangladesh

4. The Role of Society Building Heroes

5. Decision-making and Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

6. Jesus and the Theology of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

7. The Tragic Hero in Literature: Oedipus in Contrast to Other Heroes (for example, Serpico, Gatsby)

8. Nixon: Oedipus Revisited?

9. Nixon and Watergate: Misuse of Power?

B. Power Movements in America

1. Black Power Movement

2. Women's Liberation Movement

3. Stereotypes: Male and Female Roles

4. Equal Rights Amendment and Its Implications

5. Liberation Theology: Who Is Liberated?

6. Indian Movement

7. Chicano Movement

C. Futurology

1. Future Literature vs. Science Fiction (for example, 1984, Brave New World, Future Shock, Greening of America, Bradbury, Asimov, Vonnegut)

2. The Church in Future Tense

3. Future Forecasting: Scenario-writing, Trend Forecasting, Delphi Method, Genius Method

4. New Genetics, Genetic Manipulation, and Decision-making

5. Future Roles for Men and Women: Designing Tomorrow Today

a. Future of the family unit

b. Future societies

For further information about the unit, its objectives and organization, please write Sister Iadevito, Chairperson, Interdisciplinary Department, St. Teresa's Academy, 5600 Main Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64113. [27]

Index to Advertisers

CTB/McGraw-Hill	511, 533, 553, C-2
Educational Futures Projects	520

Copyright © 1978 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.