

News Notes

by Robert C. McKean and Bob L. Taylor

Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing

The National Institute of Education has recently re-established the Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing (CAPT), located at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon. The purpose of CAPT is to collect and disseminate information about tests designed to measure performance in actual or simulated settings. In education, applied performance tests measure students' ability to apply their learning to practical situations encountered in daily life or in the world of work. For example, an applied performance test might ask students to complete an income tax form, interpret a lease agreement, or fill out a job application.

Interest in applied performance testing is increasing rapidly because of the movements toward competency-based education and minimum competency testing. Applied performance tests, which measure many of the skills typically defined as "minimum competencies," are seen as an important supplement to more traditional testing modes.

Products available from CAPT are the bi-monthly *CAPT Newsletter* and two reference documents that describe CAPT Library holdings and list other sources of information related to applied performance testing. The *Annotated Bibliography on Minimum Competency Testing*, scheduled for completion in March 1978, will also be available. Materials may be ordered from the CAPT Library at a nominal cost.

The Clearinghouse is currently soliciting materials, tests,

reports of research, and other information related to applied performance testing and minimum competency testing. Anyone doing work in these areas, regardless of its stage of development, is encouraged to contact CAPT. Please send any materials or requests for CAPT products to Dean H. Nafziger, Director, Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 710 S.W. Second Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97204.

School Fuel Costs Rising

A recent survey by the American Association of School Administrators, *School Energy Crisis: Problems and Solutions*, reports that the rising cost of fuel and electricity is a serious threat to the nation's schools. Schools will be paying double in three to four years what they currently are paying for energy.

Of the 3,410 school administrators who participated in the survey, 36 percent believed that energy was a critical problem for their districts. An additional 41 percent stated that they were greatly concerned about energy and were attempting to eliminate energy waste. The cost of gas, coal, and electricity will increase at an annual rate of 20 percent, compounded, over the next few years, while the cost of oil will increase at 15 percent per year, compounded.

With fuel costs rising, other items in tight school budgets such as salaries, supplies, and equipment will have to be cut. Schools are at a big disadvantage with old buildings, inadequate insulation,

and antiquated heating and air conditioning systems. Frequently schools were built for the cheapest price possible without regard to energy waste and the cost of the upkeep of cheaper construction. There is little money available to make repairs or improve or modify building mistakes.

The report includes the ideas of experts on the best ways to reduce energy consumption. While capital investments are needed to bring schools up to energy efficient operation, they can reduce their energy consumption by 5 to 25 percent with no capital modifications by changes in their operating methods. The report includes examples of effective energy practices of schools in all types of climates.

Copies of *School Energy Crisis: Problems and Solutions* may be ordered from AASA, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, Virginia 22209. Single copies are \$8.95.

Multicultural Resources for Children

A bibliography of materials for preschool through elementary school in the areas of black, Spanish-speaking, Asian American, native American, and Pacific Island cultures is now available. This 200-page bibliography lists the children's sections of multicultural materials for all ages. In addition to the usual bibliographic information, the entire list, classified by culture and subject, includes grade levels, availability, and prices of both hardbound and paper editions. The bibliography also includes an extensive listing of sources related to the evaluation of

ethnic materials, a directory of publishers, a directory of distributors of bilingual materials, and a title index.

The bibliography is a partial listing of a unique and comprehensive collection of approximately 10,000 books, pamphlets, pictures, and periodicals dealing with the above mentioned ethnic groups. The collection is now located at the California State University, Hayward, California, under the sponsorship of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families/H.E.W./Region IX and the University.

The collection is open to the public for viewing and study during exhibit hours and for classes, conferences, and workshops by appointment. For further information, please write co-directors Margaret S. Nichols or Peggy O'Neil, Multicultural Resources, P.O. Box 2945, Stanford, California 94305. Single copies are \$4.00; ten or more copies are \$3.50 each.

Elementary Mini-Courses in Des Moines Schools

One hour each week during a six-week period students at Cattell Elementary School break away from the regular school curriculum to study a foreign language, photography, knitting, or one of 17 other subjects. According to an article in *Chalk Talk*, published by the Des Moines Independent Community School District, these courses are scheduled from 2 PM to 3 PM each Thursday from April to May. They were planned by the student council and Parent Teacher Organization in conjunction with the gifted and multi-talented program.

All grades except kindergarten are involved and Lois Smith, principal of Cattell School, said that the mini-courses were planned "to not only expand the student's knowledge or skills in a particular area, but to add to or strengthen basic skills by integrating into the course offerings reading, math, writing, vocabulary development,

spelling, social studies, science, and career education." Assisting in the program are 36 community volunteers and 18 parent volunteers.

The mini-course curriculum is varied. Courses on photography, model building, sports, radio, cooking, life saving, newspaper work, Spanish, gardening, bicycling, puppets, knitting, fishing, and gymnastics are examples of those that have been offered.

Further information may be sought by writing Lois Smith, Principal, Cattell Elementary School c/o *Chalk Talk*, Office of School-Community Relations, Des Moines Independent Community School District, 1800 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50307.

Assistance to Failing Students in Toledo Schools

SQ3-R stands for a "Formula for Better Grades" developed by Nicholas Rombes, counselor at Rogers High School in Toledo. According to an article in *School Report* published by the Toledo Public Schools, this program is the result of efforts financed by a mini-grant secured from the state department of guidance and testing.

"SQ3-R stands for the sequence of steps in learning how to study: Survey of the material; Making out questions based on principal headings; Reading, reciting, and reviewing the material."

Rombes, in meetings with students and their parents, puts six questions to failing students:

1. Is the subject matter too difficult?
2. Am I a poor reader?
3. What is my attitude toward school?
4. Do I feel a good education assures me a good job?
5. How is my school attendance?
6. Do I feel my parents are interested in my school work?

A booklet has been developed which is provided to each failing

student. This explains how to study effectively, how to take tests, and it includes materials for illustration. The booklet concludes with a detailed plan of action to guide the student in studying mathematics.

Further information may be available through writing to Nicholas Rombes in care of the *School Report*, Administration Building, Manhattan Boulevard and Elm Street, Toledo, Ohio.

Students in the Air Waves

Cody, Wyoming has an FM radio station operated by the Park County School District. It is staffed by 12 high school students and 15 junior high school students who assume the duties of disc jockeys, production, radio traffic and logging, general station management and control.

Broadcasting at 90.1 megahertz and putting out 10 watts of power, KYDZ covers the Cody area; in fact some listeners receive broadcasts 23 miles away. The radio station signs on at 9:30 am Monday through Friday and signs off at 2:30 pm Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; broadcasts are extended to 5 pm Tuesdays and Thursdays.

KYDZ's format is educational-variety, and students are responsible for the programming. Most of the material going out over the station broadcasts consists of pop rock music, public service announcements, promotions of school clubs, organizations, and activities, historical items, defensive driving tips, and story programs for grade school students and preschoolers. In addition, an important function of the station is to offer an open forum for teachers, students, administrators, and school board members.

According to an article in *The Wyoming Educator* published by the Wyoming State Department of Education, the KYDZ project accomplishes four purposes: "It provides a hands-on career approach for students in electronic communications; it provides a medium to

instruct and entertain students, teachers, and parents; it provides a vehicle to inform the community about what is happening in school; and it serves as a public relations tool."

Most Important Math Skills in Maryland

Citizens in Maryland believe that the most important math skills for getting along in this world are adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing whole numbers, and making change. According to a recent article in *Public Education in Maryland News*, published by the Maryland State Board of Education, more than 90 percent of a random sample of citizens checked off those skills as "very important."

A mail survey conducted by the State Department of Education contacted 5,000 recent high school graduates, chamber of commerce members, and general citizens, and received 1,433 responses. Arithmetic calculations with money, reading scales, unit pricing, finding percentages of numbers, using decimals, and using information from tables, such as sales and income tax, ranked second. Last on the priority list was applying the properties of parallel and perpendicular lines. Also very low were skills of measuring angles, constructing tables and graphs, using information from graphs and diagrams, and applying the properties of similar and congruent figures.

The purpose of the study was to develop a functional math test for ninth graders using the learning objectives designated as important by the public on the questionnaire. The test is being pilot-tested with students in various school systems, and plans call for it to be used throughout Maryland next year.

Further information may be available by writing to "Math Skills Project," c/o *Public Education in Maryland News*, P.O. Box 8717, Baltimore-Washington International Airport, Baltimore, Maryland 21240.

Lawyer in the Classroom

In New York State a cooperative program involving the New York State Bar Association and the State Education Department has made attorneys available to serve as resource personnel to disseminate information about the legal profession and the law at no cost to school districts. A specific Rockland County program, described in *Inside Education*, published by the New York State Education Department, provided details which may be useful to interested curriculum workers.

Under the Rockland plan, the County Bar Association secured volunteers to lecture on the legal profession and to provide basic information about the law in everyday matters. The Rockland BOCES also seeks to match classroom teachers' requests with appropriate attorneys on a wide range of legal subjects. After the classroom visits, there is a followup evaluation by both the classroom teacher and the attorney. Under this program, lawyers are also available to help teachers stage mock trials, organize field trips to courthouses and other facilities and to explore law-related educational materials.

Further details about Rockland's "Lawyer-in-the-Classroom" program may be obtained from Esther Korin at Rockland County BOCES, 61 Parrott Rd., West Nyack, New York 10994.

Canadian Assessment Program

Recently there has been a rising public concern in Canada about the quality of education. Several provinces have entered into assessment programs and have turned to National Assessment for assistance in carrying out this activity.

For instance in Alberta, the battery of tests to establish levels of achievement at the end of the 12th grade has been dropped and certification of graduates is being done on the recommendation of the high school principal. Accord-

ing to H. G. Sherk, Associate Director of Planning and Research for the Alberta Department of Education, the Minister's Advisory Committee on Student Achievement has been established to investigate these concerns. The Committee plans to study communication, computation and thinking skills of students, and it is conducting the following projects to accomplish this:

1. A survey of community groups as to their views on the quality of education in Alberta
2. An analysis of students' 12th grade marks for the years 1967-72 and 1972-77
3. An assessment of changes in arithmetic, reading, and language achievement of third-grade pupils since 1956. These areas were assessed in the Edmonton, Alberta, schools that year
4. Studies of reading, writing, science and mathematics competencies of third-, sixth-, ninth-, and twelfth-grade students
5. Preliminary work is being done for the development of methods of assessing competence in listening and speaking aspects of language arts and social studies.

Mainstreaming Arts into the Curriculum

"The only instruction in the arts received by most Rhode Island children comes from itinerant art and music teachers who teach over 800 students once every other week," said David M. Hysell, writing in *Interbang: Education in Rhode Island* published by the Rhode Island Department of Education. "Such little time in school is devoted to the arts that it is a wonder that any aesthetic development occurs at all." This condition, of course, is not restricted to Rhode Island but similar reports have emerged from other states as well.

Hysell believes the solution might be in the hands of curriculum workers. He comments, "If we can interrelate, or mainstream, the

teaching of aesthetic subjects and values within the teaching of basic subjects of social studies, language arts, science and math, we might achieve a situation where the learning of aesthetic content becomes less isolated and more meaningful."

Mainstreaming the arts into the curriculum seems logical since the arts intrinsically deal with aspects of the human condition and reflect the ideas and values of the culture from which they arise. The arts involve relevant technical concepts and have always utilized the technology present in their time of creation. In addition, the arts could provide new means for learning concepts in the other subject matters. Infusing the arts into the general education component of the curriculum could provide meaningful arts education for all children.

Gifted and Talented Education

The New York State Board of Regents recommended to local school districts in a 1976 position paper that they initiate or increase their efforts to meet the needs of their gifted and talented students. The objective was the development of comprehensive long-range programming to meet these students' needs.

The Board of Regents provided that a survey of school districts be conducted to assess state-wide needs of gifted and talented students, which was to provide the base for a comprehensive long-range state plan. Data from the survey indicated:

1. From the districts reporting, 83 percent perceived that their communities ranged from "only mildly supportive" to "strongly opposed" to any effort for the benefit of the gifted and talented.

2. Again, 96 percent indicated that they did not have organized parent groups serving as advocates for the gifted and talented in their communities.

3. From all the school districts, only 16 percent were offer-

ing a program, and only \$14 per \$100,000 was being spent on programming designed for the gifted and talented.

The Education Department has developed a state plan calling for a series of field guides dealing with the identification, programming, and in-service and preservice activities. This plan provides for the establishment of at least two pilot Regional Resource Centers.

How To Survive in a Period of Enrollment Decline

Across the U.S., it is clear that many districts are in a period of decline in both enrollment and in the ability to finance education. According to Jerry L. Bellon, quoted in an article in the *DPI Dispatch* published by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction, "Different attitudes, approaches, and understandings are needed in managing the decline." A six-step systematic approach may be useful to administrators, supervisors, and curriculum workers.

1. A thorough assessment of the district's educational program is the first step. Bellon suggests that we collect descriptions of all current programs and projects, indicating the objectives of the programs and how well students are attaining these objectives. The effort should show what resources have been allocated for each program and whether the program has reached the planning level, operational level, or if it is about to be phased out.

2. A second step is to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of the schools. Such a survey should include the educational expectations of all groups in the population so their expectations can be compared to the program assessment above.

3. The next step is to determine which educational goals have higher priority. This needs to be done with the advice of the community and the professional staff.

If decisions are made whereby high priority goals receive support necessary to develop top quality programs, some programs may have to be severely reduced or eliminated.

4. The fourth activity calls for a careful study of the organizational structure of the school district. Careful analysis of the organization will help to identify problem areas which may negate successful attainment of the educational goals.

5. The fifth step is an appraisal program to establish that the efforts of all school personnel are focused on the priority goals. "The appraisal program should be developed from the top down, not from the bottom up," said Bellon.

6. Finally, a continuous staff development program must be formulated. Staff development and renewal programs will be the vehicle for working with highly stable aging personnel.

Female Math Achievement

Studies consistently report that performance in advanced mathematics is higher in males than in females. Their weak mathematics background may limit the future career opportunities of women. A publication of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *A Comparison of Mathematics Achievement of Males and Females*, presents a summary of the research suggesting that the weaker mathematics background of women is the result of their attitudes toward the subject rather than an inherent cognitive disability.

Until junior high school, testing results demonstrate that boys and girls achieve nearly identical scores in both computation and application areas of mathematics. Difference between the computation skills of the two sexes remains slight after junior high school, but males demonstrate a greater ability to apply the computation skills and to handle advanced concepts.

Seemingly the poor perform-

ance of girls after junior high school comes from not taking advanced mathematics courses during high school. Studies find that enrollment in courses beyond algebra favors boys by a ratio of 2:1. However, if comparisons are made between the two groups with similar math preparation, there is little score differential.

Research has identified several factors influencing women to not take advanced high school math courses—lower feeling of competency, identification of math as a male activity, and the lack of career potential for them. In addition, there seem to be few appropriate female role models, teachers offer less encouragement to girls, and mathematics texts are sexist in orientation. Also, parents may not be supporting daughters in taking advanced mathematics.

Supervisors Relate Through Language

Supervisors may cause predictable responses by the things they say to persons with whom they work. *The Core Teacher* recently presented an item taken from the Kansas Association for Core Curriculum that provides specific examples of this:

1. Killer Phrases—how to chloroform creative thinking:

- "A swell idea, but . . ."
- "It won't work."
- "We haven't the time."
- "We've tried that before."
- "It's not good enough."
- "There are better ways than that."
- "Who do you think you are?"
- "Let's discuss it some other time."
- "We're too big for that."
- "What you're really saying is . . ."
- "It needs more study."
- "Let's shelve it for the time being."
- "How about forming a committee?"

- "Let me add to that."
- "I just know it won't work."
- "Why start anything new?"

2. Ways to say "Good for you!"

- "Wow!"
- "Keep up the good work!"
- "Very good. Why don't you show the group?"
- "I bet your mom and dad would be proud . . ."
- "That's quite an improvement."
- "You really outdid yourself today."
- "That's an interesting way of looking at it."
- "My goodness. How impressive!"
- "Congratulations! You got — right!"
- "I appreciate your help."
- "Beautiful!"
- "You make it look easy."
- "That's coming along nicely."
- "That looks as if it's going to be a great report."
- "You're on the right track now."
- "Very interesting!"

Summer School of the Arts

Again this past summer, 492 New York state high school students with exceptional talent in the performing and creative arts participated in a summer school of the arts program. The program is conducted at special schools across the State and is administered by the State Education Department. While a School of Orchestra Studies has been conducted in New York for the past seven summers, this is the second year that a complete summer arts program has been provided. Separate schools were conducted in choral studies, dance, film/media arts, orchestral studies, theater, and the visual arts. Participating students were selected for the Summer 1977 program through a rigorous statewide screening process. Scholarships,

ranging from partial to full tuition, were awarded on the basis of need and ability.

The program provided an opportunity for some of the State's most talented student artists and performers to study for four weeks under nationally prominent professionals. The schools were designed to stimulate the interest and creative talents of the students who were planning professional careers in such areas as music, dance, theater, or other arts areas.

While this program was designed to achieve goals similar to the Governor's Schools for the Gifted and Talented in such states as Pennsylvania, Indiana, North Carolina, and Michigan, it has an unusual administrative structure. In other programs, the normal procedure is to bring the students and faculty to a single campus for a four-week period. In New York, the various component schools are located at sites where they can take advantage of artist organizations in residence, which then serve as faculty for the school. The arrangement provides for a significant increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of the schools.



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