

# NEWS NOTES

by Bob L. Taylor and Robert C. McKean

## Learning Disabilities May Be Linked to Delinquency

A comparative study of boys aged 12-15 attending public schools in Baltimore, Indianapolis, and Phoenix, and boys of the same age with records of adjudicated delinquencies, was reported in the Summer 1978 issue of *ETS Developments*. The delinquent youths were all involved in the juvenile justice system, including some who were institutionalized. There were 984 public school youth and 397 delinquents in the study conducted under a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the U.S. Justice Department. The investigation is being conducted by the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities and the Institute for Business, Law and Social Research at Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska.

The initial phase of the three-part national study indicated that the incidence of learning disabilities was significantly higher in juvenile delinquents than in other adolescents. The second phase of the study will provide remediation to selected groups of delinquents who are judged to be learning-disabled. A spokesperson for the project stated that to date research had only touched the complex relationship between learning disability and delinquency. In the project, the researchers have developed a new method of determining what is a learning disability.

It is believed that learning-disabled students, unable to perform near grade level and frustrated by years of underachieving,

engage in antisocial behavior during adolescence. While remediation is offered in many schools, the process usually is slow and inadequate; hence, it does not provide many pupils the help that they need. The children do not evidence retardation or emotional disturbance except as related to the learning disability; in fact, they are usually of average or above-average intelligence.

For more information on the project, contact Paul Campbell, ETS, Princeton, New Jersey 08541.

## Student Conflict Committee

Such problems as fights, thefts, racial disturbances, and other student conflicts are handled by a student committee at Jane Addams Junior High School in Seattle, Washington. Vice-principal Jack Duranceau has found that fighting, unsolved thefts, bullying, and extortion at school have declined, and that there are fewer letters to parents and suspensions. The Student Conflict Committee has reduced the problems of the vice-principal.

The committee is made up of approximately 25 of the most respected students in the school. Members are selected for their influence on peers. While the students usually are not top students, athletes, or elected student body members, they are the "real leaders" of the school. When a problem occurs, the vice-principal calls a pair of the committee members out of class and gives them a meeting room in which to work. They then bring the adversaries in the dispute together and resolve the

problem without further adult intervention. While the meetings rarely last a full class period, they almost always resolve the problem. When the committee members have completed their task, they usually report to the vice-principal that nothing more needs to be done, and since the purpose of the meeting was to resolve the conflict and not to assign blame, nothing is done.

The committee acts for the most part without advice from the vice-principal. Naturally, this requires that the vice-principal put a great deal of confidence in the students' ability to resolve the conflicts. It is interesting that originally the administration tried training the committee members in interpersonal communication techniques and conflict resolution, but that later the students did better on their own. Members of the conflict committee display an ability for getting to the heart of the misunderstanding without hurting the feelings of either party.

For additional information about the committee, write: Principal Warren Arnhart, Jane Addams Junior High School, 11051 34th N.E., Seattle, Washington 98125.

## 1977 Missouri Assessment Showed Little Change

While Missouri high school seniors showed marked improvement in their knowledge of the metric system and a decline in understanding of citizenship and government institutions, their scores on the statewide assessment of

seniors conducted by the Department of Education in October 1977 showed little overall change from the 1975 assessment. The second assessment scores provided the first comparative data on performance of Missouri students in all areas of school experience.

The purpose of the assessment project is to establish year-to-year changes and long-term trends in student achievement in the state. Local school districts may use the results to identify areas where student performance is low and to make decisions about curriculum changes. While the statewide assessment is made every two years, a local school district may give the test annually.

A randomly selected sample of 10,000 seniors from 86 public schools were given the 1977 assessment test covering four broad areas: intellectual development, physical development, social development, and career development. There were 453 test items. The four general areas are divided into 17 subgoal categories. While the assessment instruction covers knowledge, skills, and attitudes from all areas of the school curriculum, some students may not have taken courses related to every test item.

On citizenship and knowledge of government institutions the scores declined between 1975 and 1977, and student performance

dropped on 22 of the 32 items. The results followed similar declines reported by National Assessment of Educational Progress in their assessment of 13- and 17-year-old students in 1976 on citizenship knowledge. On the other hand, the increase in student knowledge of the metric system by nearly 10 points from 57.8 to 67.4 percent correct responses reflected the greater emphasis in schools on the metric system in recent years.

### Indian Stories and Legends

A new primary-grade, supplementary language arts program, "Stories and Legends of the Northwest," has been developed by community people from 12 Indian reservations in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana. The reading series includes a teacher's manual, cassette tape, and student booklets. The recent publication of Levels II and III of the series completed five years of cooperative effort by more than 250 reservation-based planners, writers, and artists. A policy board representing the Northwest Indian community directed the developmental activities.

"The Indian Reading Series" offers a wide selection of student books for Levels I, II, and III with accompanying materials for the teachers. The series was designed

to improve reading comprehension, classroom participation, and written and oral language skills when used with a basal reading program. The participating tribes authenticated the materials, and they hold the copyrights. The materials were field-tested with more than 1,200 Indian and non-Indian children in 93 classrooms in the Northwest.

There are 60 sequenced, illustrated booklets that focus on Indian legends and contemporary stories from Indian tribes of the plains, plateau, and coast. There is an illustrated teacher's manual that relates Indian community learning styles and language experience activities, a 30-minute cassette tape of "Little Songs and Indian Dances," as well as the student booklets with accompanying activity cards providing background information and suggested teaching activities for each book.

Prices and ordering information may be obtained from Educational Systems, Inc., 2360 S.W. 170th Avenue, Beaverton, Oregon 97005.

### Line Authority for the Supervisor?

The position of instructional supervisor is "amorphous and often ambiguous." According to Gerald Firth, writing in the *TASCD Journal* published by the Tennessee

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION (Act of August 12, 1970: Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code). 1. Title of publication: Educational Leadership. 2. Date of Filing: October 13, 1978. 3. Frequency of issue: Eight times a year, October through May. 3a. Number of issues published annually: Eight. 3b. Annual subscription price: \$15.00. 4. Location of known office of publication: 1701 K St., N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20006. 5. Location of headquarters or general business offices of the publishers: Same address. 6. Names and complete addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1701 K St., N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20006; Editor, Ronald Brandt, 1701 K St., N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20006; Managing Editor, none. 7. Owner: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1701 K St., N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20006. 8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None. 9. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates (Section 132.122, PSM): The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months. 10. Extent and nature of circulation: (A) Total number of copies printed (net press run): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 40,687; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 43,000; (B) Paid circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales; Average number of copies each

issue during preceding 12 months, 152; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0-; Mail subscriptions: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 38,680; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 41,002; (C) Total paid circulation (Sum of 10B1 and 10B2): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 38,832; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 41,002; (D) Free distribution by mail, carrier, or other means—samples, complimentary, and other free copies: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 231; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 234; (E) Total distribution (Sum of C and D): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 39,063; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 41,236; (F) Copies not distributed: 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 1,624; actual number of copies each single issue published nearest to filing date, 1,764; 2. Returns from news agents: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, none; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, none; (G) Total (Sum of E, F1 and 2): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 40,687; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 43,000.

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

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, "The unusual and perhaps unique status of the instructional supervisor derives from cloudy interpretations of the position, of the place such a position occupies within the school organization, and of the functions ascribed to the position."

Three factors seem to contribute to the disagreement on the parameters for the job:

1. Legal identity or statutory recognition for the instructional supervisor is rare. "Without exception, state school codes fail to adequately define the position of instructional supervisor by title or duties."

2. Distinctive, clear, and precise certification is unavailable for the instructional supervisor. Often certification consists of an endorsement on a current teacher's license.

3. Local education agencies display broad discretion in setting the role, duties, and responsibilities for the instructional supervisor. Often there is no written job description for such positions. "The assignments tend, therefore, to become idiosyncratic and to reflect circumstance, time, and location."

Characteristically, the position has been conceived as a staff or advisory role rather than a line or command role. Analogous to the role of the guidance counselor, the supervisor is expected to advise and counsel with teachers and administrators, but does not make the decisions for them.

"An instructional supervisor serving a staff capacity is not subject to challenge in the courts (or at least has not been until now) as are those serving in line positions." The supervisor is insulated from the students by the teacher who is directly responsible for them and to a considerable extent the supervisor also is insulated from teachers by the principal who is directly responsible for them.

Firth believes that the instructional supervisor has three alternatives:

1. Accept the present state of his ill-defined legal role.

2. Seek clarification of any legal protection that exists for a staff or advisory position.

3. Seek to have his role redefined so that he occupies a line position in selected areas with authority commensurate with conferred responsibility.

"While the last action certainly would have the greatest risk, any other would deny the instructional supervisor full participation in educational affairs. The absence of responsibility on the part of the instructional supervisor deprives him of authority, demeans his status, and impairs his efficiency and effectiveness." Clear statutory definition, distinctive certification, and specific job description provide desirable approaches to a more active role. "It is difficult to conceive that the instructional supervisor will be able to influence substantially school policy in regard to personnel and/or programs unless the position in which he serves is cloaked with authority."

### Comparison of Black and White Students' Scores

In the April 1978 newsletter, "Learning," of the Montgomery County (Maryland) public schools, students ability and achievement test scores for black and white students were compared for the county. The comparisons were made to comply with commitments made in the Black Action Steps and the Title IX Action Plan.

The comparison showed that the mean scores achieved by black students on the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* at each grade level and on each test were lower than those achieved by white students at the same grade level. Group differences ranged from 8/10ths of a school year for the math test in grade three to two years and one month in work study skills at the ninth grade. Other results were similar. However, when black students' scores on achievement tests were compared with white students' scores (of the same ability level),

the differences were sharply reduced. There were both black and white students represented at every ability level, and both groups' scores demonstrated support for the generalization that students who score high on ability tests will score high on achievement tests.

Since both black and white students were represented at every point along the continuum of ability scores, race does not seem to be the controlling factor in these differences. However, Superintendent Bernardo reported in the article that this first effort at score comparisons did not yield enough data to define the problems being faced. There is no knowledge of how the achievement scores of black students in Montgomery County compare with those of black students in public schools elsewhere.

Superintendent Bernardo identified several points in a plan to attack the problem of the gap between white and black students' scores.

1. Have principals and teachers examine their school scores to identify local differences and needs.

2. Continue compensatory programs to improve the achievement of students with lower ability scores regardless of race.

3. Improve basic skills instruction for all students.

4. Introduce new efforts to develop cognitive skills that are not directly related to subject matter.

5. Improve home-school cooperation to eliminate stereotyped thinking and behavior in order that both home and school increase their expectations for lower-achieving students.

### What Is Good About Declining Enrollment?

Commenting in *Education in Rhode Island* on a recent study of enrollments in Rhode Island, State Commissioner Schmidt contended that there are opportunities in the pattern of declining enrollment to make education a richer experience for children. Also, it could provide the chance to coordinate commun-

ity services so that other groups may use unused rooms and buildings. An integrative use of a building has the potential for a big payoff in new kinds of educational programs that would involve adult groups and the elderly in school activities, which would prove to be a benefit to the school.

The report predicted that enrollment in Rhode Island was projected to decline by 16 percent between 1975 and 1980, and by another 16 percent from 1980 to 1985. While changes in enrollment are expected to range between some districts actually experiencing growth to some suffering a decline of more than 40 percent, the overall drop is predicted at 30 percent in elementary and secondary pupil enrollments in the public schools of the state by 1987.

The primary factor in the enrollment decline is the 41.7 percent drop in Rhode Island's birthrate between 1960 and 1975; however, poor economic conditions probably contributed some to the decline. The peak enrollment came in 1971-72 at 190,696 and has been dropping steadily since then, and it should drop to 120,500 by 1987-88.

One of the problems cited by Schmidt is that the declining enrollment is not resulting in the expected reduction in school costs. Since there are many fixed costs, inflation is driving these costs up

at the rate of six to seven percent a year or higher. As is very evident, taxpayers are being caught in a bind on this, and there is a taxpayer's revolt taking place. This declining enrollment is as demanding of educational leadership as was the rapid growth in enrollment that was experienced in the 1960s.

### Teachers Learn About Science Careers

Reported in the May 1978 issue of *Board in Brief*, published by the Massachusetts Department of Education, is a Title IV project based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology directed at better informing teachers concerning careers in science and technology. The project, Work in Technology and Science (WITS), arranges visits for teachers and counselors to major companies, summer internships, and implementation workshops. While the original idea for the project was aimed at recruiting more women into science, the focus has been broadened since there is a rising need for qualified personnel in the rapidly growing fields of science and technology.

Educators are the target group for the project since they have direct contact with students; hence, they may increase science career awareness for many students with

whom they come in contact. Each visit to a company includes about 20 educators, and each is provided an information package. The teachers and counselors are divided into small groups for the tours of the plants. Time is provided for them to interview employees about their jobs, and they see the full range of careers at all levels in each organization that they visit. Special attention is paid to opportunities for women during the visits.

Follow-up workshops provide the teachers with creative ways to share the information with their students. Some teachers have taken their classes on tours modeled after the WITS visits. In the summer internships, teachers and counselors assist in such work areas in companies as laboratories, personnel offices, and data processing divisions. They spend from three to six weeks in a company and have the opportunity to look around the facility with as many live encounters as possible. The interns are paid a moderate stipend. In its year and a half of operation, WITS has arranged site visits and internships for 37 schools and 18 companies. The director of the project, Edith Ruina, believes that teachers have not concerned themselves enough with career orientation and that they need to become more aware of the importance of the working world to themselves and their students.

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