

NEWS NOTES

by Bob. L. Taylor and Robert C. McKean

Implementing Individualization in Secondary Schools

"Effective leadership and staff involvement through shared decision making and inservice training are prime elements in the successful implementation of individualized education in senior high schools." This is one of the conclusions reported in the *Wisconsin R&D Center News* resulting from three field studies conducted by R&D Center researchers. The studies are as follows:

- John Daresh, "Facilitative Environments in Senior High Schools that Individualize Instruction";
- Glenn Neiner, "Analysis of Planned Change within Comprehensive Senior High Schools that Individualize Instruction";
- Noel Watkins, "Actual and Ideal Decision-Making Processes Utilized in Senior High Schools that Individualize Instruction."

The studies dealt with six senior high schools located in different parts of the country and included a variety of socioeconomic communities.

A dynamic leader was essential in all six schools. These leaders (the principal in all cases except one) helped to create open, trusting atmospheres in which staff members felt secure enough to take risks and make some inevitable mistakes. It was found that continuity of leadership and support (or at least neutrality) from the central office level were also important for successful implementation of the innovative programs.

Staff involvement in the decision-making process was said to be highly important in the initial stages of the program to develop a feeling of staff ownership. However, a high level of shared decision-making became less important, even somewhat undesirable, in later phases of the implementation.

Staff development was found to be essential. Staff development activities tended to diminish several years after the schools initiated the innovations. This appeared to have negative consequences, especially for new teachers.

Other findings that came out of the three studies included the following:

1. Schools would have been more successful had they defined student behavioral expectations more adequately from the start.
2. External funding for initial costs was helpful, but added outside resources were not required for maintenance of the programs.
3. State minimum competency legislation provided some legitimacy to the individualized programs, but somewhat ill-defined demands for "basic education" often reduced community support.
4. An articulated philosophy of individualized education is essential for making policy and managerial decisions.
5. An articulated policy for decision making is essential to the successful implementation of an innovative program.

Reports of the three studies are available from ERIC. Abstracts as well as the ERIC document numbers are available free from the

Center Information Office, Wisconsin R&D Center, 1025 W. Johnson Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

Required Law Course

A one-semester, basic law course is a new requirement for students graduating from Detroit public senior high schools. It was mandated by the Board of Education to provide each student with a basic knowledge of law and an understanding of his or her relationship to it.

The course will expose students to the facts of legal life. Topics to be covered are: the courts and how they work; contracts; housing law; damages, injuries, and insults; family law; crime and the system; law enforcement; the corrections systems; wills; social security; negligence; liabilities related to automobile accidents; civil justice; and consumer law.

Students will take the course at the tenth- or eleventh-grade level. Social studies teachers are participating either in an intensive two-week training workshop or afterschool workshops in preparation to teach it. Also, special supplementary materials are being distributed to social studies departments as well as to the individual teachers. The course should be in operation in all Detroit high schools by this year.

Need for Gifted Programs

Recently Dorothy Sisk, Director, Gifted and Talented Program, U.S. Office of Education, made the following observations in a present-

tation. Half of all gifted children in the U. S. are able to read when they enter school, but by the time they reach the third grade many of them are reading only at grade level. The federal government has been spending only about \$2.5 million a year on this area, but in the coming year the budget is to be doubled. In 1972 only about four percent of the nation's gifted were getting any special help. Currently 12 percent (307,000) of the children are being served. In any population, there should be between three to five percent gifted.

As Sisk explained, a child can be gifted in different ways. Some of the special abilities of a gifted or talented child are:

1. The intellectually gifted are able to gather and use a great amount of knowledge on a broad range of subjects;
2. Giftedness in one academic area, for example, math;
3. Creative/productive thinking;
4. Leadership ability;
5. Talent in the visual or performing arts;
6. Psychomotor or kinesthetic ability.

While the type of giftedness most often recognized is intellectual ability, cutoff scores on I.Q.

tests used to determine giftedness range as much as from 120 to 140 depending on the state or agency involved. Other identifying traits of a gifted child are the ability to do things a little earlier, a little faster, a little better, and a little differently than other children. Sometimes gifted children have unique ways of seeing things.

A three-step procedure may be used in a case-study method for determining children who are to be placed in special classes for the gifted and talented. The method is:

1. Test results;
2. Anecdotal information—observations of teachers and others in regular contact with the child;
3. Committees making the final selections.

The committee should include classroom teachers, parents, psychologists, and school administrators. The use of a committee prevents the problem that may develop when only a single person makes the decision.

In response to the question, "What is the best way to teach gifted students?" Sisk points out that there is no one best way. Teachers should value creative thinking and be flexible in their instruction. Good teachers of the gifted are comfortable with different ways of doing things.

Finally, it was pointed out that a real problem for the bright child is that it is not popular to be bright. "Peer pressure is tough. It's OK to be smart if you're also an athlete, but if you have to choose, choose, athletics. Or, if you're smart, don't let anyone know it." Gifted students need to learn how to deal with their own feelings of a need for peer sanction of their activities. A good teacher can be of real help here.

Journalism Accreditation Booklet

The American Council on Education for Journalism has published "Accredited Journalism and Mass Communications Education." This publication lists the accredited college journalism programs. Teachers and counselors who advise students with respect to careers in journalism should find the booklet to be of value.

Up to 10 copies of the booklet will be supplied free to schools and educational organizations. Eleven to 100 copies cost \$.25 each and 101 to 500 copies cost \$.20 each. Write to Milton Cross, Secretary-Treasurer, ACEJ, School of Journalism, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri 65211.

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