

News Notes

by Bob L. Taylor and Robert C. McKean

New Curriculum Materials

The following listed materials are now available through the Philadelphia School District:

1. *How to Organize a Reading Program and What to do in Problem Situations—A Manual for Principals*. This guide focuses on the key role of the principal in the success of a school's reading program. Although it is based on a specific child-centered philosophy, it is primarily a practical text. It is short on rhetoric and long on concrete, pragmatic suggestions, and contains many charts and diagrams that may be removed to hang on a bulletin board or used as an at-hand reference. The guide is essentially a "how to" or a "what to do in case of" kind of book. It's a useful tool and resource for principals, whether they are organizing a new reading program or implementing, recharging, or modifying an existing one.

2. *Help Children Cope* is an illustrated booklet designed to be used by parents to teach their children some basic interpersonal relationship principles. Teachers interested in working on classroom climate issues will also find this publication valuable. The guide is divided into three sections, each with specific activities that relate to the concepts or skills being presented. The sections include *Communicating Feelings*, *Learning Specific Social Skills*, and *Influencing Behavior*.

3. *The Middle School*. The past twenty years have seen the middle school survive and grow dramatically. This clearly written publication reviews middle school concepts, organization, teaching/learning styles, and program recommendations. An extensive bibliography and glossary are included.

Copies of these three publications may be obtained by writing to Bernard G. Kelner, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction,

Room 309, Administration Building, 21st and the Parkway, Philadelphia, PA 19103. Please include check in the amount of \$4.50, \$4.00, and \$3.00 respectively to cover publication cost and mailing.

Math Anxiety Counseling

The Counseling Center at Indiana University is developing a program to aid students with math anxiety. It is aimed at helping the student understand and deal with it. Many people avoid occupations with a math connection, and math anxiety seems to be one of the causes of this. Math anxiety seems to start with a sudden, frightening, and frequently minor failure in math. An individual develops a belief that a concept or equation is impossible for him/her to handle. From then on, the math anxiety sufferer believes he/she will not make additional progress in mathematics.

Shelia Tobias, who is counseling psychologist for the program, has found that the problem can often be attributed to some very common misunderstanding such as the inability to differentiate between the common use of a word and the word's mathematical connotation. For example, take the term, "multiply." In common usage, the word implies that the product will be greater, but in the multiplication of fractions, the answer will actually be smaller than the figures multiplied.

At times, students with a fear of math do not ask the questions that will clarify their problems. Because mathematics understanding builds one idea on the next and derives the abstractions from the concrete illustrations, the student who misses a fundamental idea may end up hopelessly lost in a mathematical mire.

In some cases, a review and assessment of the steps leading to the problem of math anxiety helps the student to understand the development of the difficulty. At Indiana University, this will be the first step in

math anxiety therapy. Students will complete a questionnaire to help determine the level of their math ability and anxiety. They then will review the history of their math problems with a counselor and try to determine the factors influencing their feelings about mathematics. Some students may improve just from this session. After the initial interview, those students needing additional help are placed in a group led by both a counselor and someone knowledgeable in math. The IU program aims at both skill building in math and dealing with math anxiety.

Careers in Business Orient Ph.D.'s to New Opportunities

New York State is sponsoring a project to open career opportunities for people with doctoral training in the humanities and related social sciences. The project is sponsored jointly by the State Education Department and the New York University Graduate School of Business Administration.

The program centers around an intensive seven-week business orientation program offered by NYU—GBA. The primary objective of the project is to demonstrate that the pool of Ph.D.'s in the humanities and social sciences contains a number of men and women with aptitude for and interest in business careers. In the past, people with advanced education in these fields have almost exclusively gone into college teaching, and they have had little opportunity to enter nonacademic positions. The participants in the program were carefully screened based on their past records and on their potential for success in business.

The program is designed to acquaint students to the corporate world with a rigorous introduction to some of the skills that are needed. Students meet five days a week, both morning and afternoon, for the seven-week program. They take courses in basic

business subjects — accounting, finance, economics, marketing, management, and statistics. Also, they take a series of compressed modules in international business, social and legal environment, and corporate strategy. Emphasis is placed on career orientation and development through individual counseling. In addition, a course on career decision making and workshops on the techniques of interviewing and resume writing are included.

Legal Advice for School Publication Sponsors

The job of the school publication adviser is becoming more difficult as the First Amendment rights of young journalists conflict with concerns of administrators. Recently, school publication advisers have been dismissed because of such conflicts with their administration.

The Newspaper Fund asked Michael Simpson, Director of the Student Press Law Center, to provide some advice for teachers who were facing administrative pressure on the constitutional rights issues. Following is a summary of his statement:

1. Do not give the administration any reason for removing you. The courts have established that a teacher cannot be fired for exercising First Amendment rights or for refusing to do an illegal act such as censoring a student publication. Nevertheless, the administrator may fire an adviser if legitimate grounds can be established.

2. There should be student publication guidelines that clearly define the role and responsibility of the faculty adviser. It should be clear that you are a teacher and adviser, but not a censor of student publications. If the administration wants to carry out unconstitutional censorship, that is their job.

3. Inform the administrator

about the recent interpretation of the First Amendment under which neither the administration nor the adviser may legally dictate the content of student publications.

4. Work for a sense of responsibility in the students. They should not be writing outrageous stories just to determine what they can get away with.

5. Do not engage in conflicts with the administration. If there is a substantive issue involving the freedom of the press, then take that up if necessary.

6. Join a teachers' organization, for the organization is in a stronger position to pursue issues with the administration than an individual teacher.

If you have questions about this issue, contact Michael Simpson, Student Press Law Center, 1750 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

Course Teaches Parents Behavior Modification Techniques

A summer project of the University of Louisville's Learning Improvement Center offers a training class to teach parents behavior modification techniques that will help them change the behavior of their children who have a learning or behavioral disability. They are taught techniques that can be applied by a parent to any child. Better behavior on the part of a child not only makes home life more pleasant, but it may lead to better performance in school as well as in social activities.

Another aspect of the program is that parent efforts at home will supplement those of the teacher at school. The program is part of a larger project aimed at educating and involving parents in the training of their handicapped children. Whether it is a teenager's refusal to do homework or a brain-damaged preschooler throwing

a temper tantrum, parents need to learn how to respond to these trying situations.

The basic idea is nothing really new. The parent tells the child what he or she should be doing and promises certain consequences if the child does not do as told. However, if the child disobeys, the parent must follow through with the punishment or provide the promised reward if the task is carried out. The vital part of the procedure is the parent actually carrying out the punishment or reward part of the disciplinary tactic. Consistency is important. Parents can learn to change the small, annoying kinds of behavior first, and with the same procedures, they can successfully work on larger problems.

Elementary School Pupils Use Calculators

Do second- and third-grade students who use electronic calculators for an extended period do better or worse in basic math than comparable students without the use of calculators? This question was explored by Jim Moser, Wisconsin R&D Center staff member. According to the *Wisconsin R&D Center News*, Moser "found evidence that, in some skill areas, the children with calculators did better."

The researcher discovered in his study of 200 children in eight math classes in two Madison (Wisconsin) schools that there were no statistically significant differences in math skills except that second-grade pupils who used calculators did significantly better in the subtraction of one-, two-, and three-digit numbers. Third graders were more proficient at subtracting three-digit numbers, understanding place value, and knowing basic division facts than the noncalculator users. Calculators were used in the regular curriculum, and the pupils used them about a quarter of the math instruction time.

Moser concluded, "While one cannot definitely say that the gains were due to calculators, it is safe to say that there were no negative effects from the calculators." The full report of the study is available from Jim Moser, Wisconsin R&D Center, 1025 W. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53706.

L.A. Schools Violence Study

Los Angeles District security officials reported 894 assaults during 1977-78, an increase of 6.7 percent from the previous year, and 133 sex offenses, an increase of 37 percent. Based on this information, the School Board initiated a year-long study of violence in the district schools.

The study was conducted by a 48-member District Committee to

Identify the Prime Cases and Possible Solutions to Campus Violence. One of the most frequent causes of school incidents was found to be outsiders on campus. It was estimated that about 50 percent of the violent crimes on school property were caused by this group rather than by students from the school. To check this problem, it was suggested that state legislation and new district policies be drafted to reduce loitering at schools. Also, all school employees should wear an identification badge while on duty, and all non-student visitors should report to the school office for authorization to be on campus.

Another cause of trouble at school was gang activity. Gang prevention committees should be formed to set up programs to reduce gang

activity. Parents need to be involved in this anti-gang activity. Also, school office space should be made available to probation officers to counsel students in their charge at school.

In order to reduce truancy and class-cutting, the report proposed establishing a fixed attendance policy, contacting parents after two days of consecutive absence, and increasing the number of attendance counselors.

Other study recommendations were: (a) requiring the teaching of values; (b) starting drug abuse programs in the elementary grades; (c) setting up a district code of conduct; (d) reducing the student counselor ratio in secondary schools to 1:300; and (e) providing more alternative programs for students who do not do well in regular classrooms.

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