

News Notes

Los Angeles Schools Reduce Testing

Aiming at eliminating duplication of effort and reducing time spent on testing, the Los Angeles Board of Education voted to reduce the number of tests required of students in the sixth and eleventh grades.

Sixth-grade students have been required to take three standard skills tests—the *California Assessment Program* tests, which give information on student performance on a state-wide basis; *Survey of Essential Skills*, which measures students' academic success; and *Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills*, which provides teachers with diagnostic information.

In addition, the eleventh-grade students take the *Test of Performance in Computational Skills*, *Senior High Assessment of Reading Performance*, and *WRITE, SR*, an English composition test. The *Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills* is to be made optional in both the sixth and eleventh grades.

Los Angeles school officials estimate that on the average students were spending 76.5 hours each school year taking tests. Additional class hours were consumed by preparation and evaluation. Perhaps other school districts should review the teacher-pupil time used by their testing programs.

First Graders Like Teacher Their Own Size

First graders at Liberty Elementary School in Putnam County, West Virginia, look up to their teacher in every way but one. According to the *County Superintendents' Newsletter*, published by the West Virginia Department of Education, "Students like and respect their teacher very much, but they don't literally look up to Diana Layne when talking to her. That's because she's their size. At 3'11" the teacher stands eye to eye with her students."

"There's no disadvantage whatsoever," says Layne. "At the blackboard I use a small stool. Things I use often are kept in low file drawers or on low shelves. To change a bulletin board, I stand on a table or let a fifth grader help me."

Of course when school started students were excited about having a teacher their own size and had much to say. Diana Layne reports, "A girl asked if I were a midget. That's when I explained that I'm a dwarf since my arms and legs are smaller. Midgets are smaller all over."

With a teacher for a mother and a principal for a father, it is only logical that Layne would seriously consider teaching as a career and that is how she came to be at Liberty Elementary School.

Women and Mathematics

The low rate of participation of girls and women in the study of mathematics in our schools has become an issue of national concern. A monograph, *Perspectives on Women and Mathematics*, contains a collection of papers from the San Diego meeting of the National Council of Mathematics. Copies of this publication are available (\$5) from the ERIC Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics and Environmental Education, The Ohio State University, 1200 Chambers Road, Columbus, Ohio 43212.

Handicapped Education Costs Rising

According to a survey published by the National School Boards Association, handicapped students total 3.9 million and make up about 9 percent of the total enrollment in the nation's schools. The average annual cost for educating handicapped students is twice the average cost of \$1,819 to educate nonhandicapped

students. The cost to the nation of educating handicapped students is over \$5 billion a year.

Local school district budgets for special education are rising 14 percent each year, which is twice as fast as the instructional and operating budgets of the schools. On a national basis special education budgets are equivalent to 11.5 percent of the instructional budgets. It is expected that these cost differentials will continue to widen.

The cost ratio between handicapped and nonhandicapped education increases with school district size. While federal mandate is the primary factor behind rising costs of educating handicapped children, the federal government will contribute no more than \$218 per child, or about 11 percent of the total, in the 1980-81 school year.

The federal government should more adequately fund its handicapped children's act, for the act requires the local school district to provide free appropriate education to all handicapped students, ages three to 21. Federal mandates have imposed heavy costs in time, money, and resources on local school districts, and the monitoring activities of state agencies responsible for its administration have continued to threaten the autonomy of the local districts.

The survey was conducted by National School Boards Association's Office of Federal Relations during February and March 1979.



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