

# News Notes

Bob L. Taylor and Robert C. McKean

## Five ASCD Affiliates Plan Conference

"For the first time anywhere in the United States, the combined educational communities of five ASCD affiliates of the Eastern Region States — Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania — will join forces to plan and initiate a conference around the most current and significant topics and issues in education." According to the *NYSASCD Newsletter*, this mutual effort will be hosted by the New York state ASCD.

The program seeks to appeal to all kinds of educational positions and has relevance to all student levels. It will include:

1. Mini institutes — three hour in-depth presentations by nationally known educators;
2. Student presentations — specially selected programs demonstrated by students and providing first hand opportunities to participants;
3. Workshops — programs, techniques, and strategies presented by educators from all of the five Eastern Region States;
4. Speakers — outstanding educators addressing conference participants on crucial topics.

The planning for this unique annual conference is chaired by Marcia Knoll. Other state ASCD units wishing to secure information regarding this conference may write Marcia Knoll, 147-12 Grand Central Parkway, Briarwood, New York 11435.

## Curriculum Plans Available for Tobacco Education

A new three part Tobacco Education Curriculum has been published by the New York State Education Department. The three parts include: (1) kindergarten; (2) grade 5; and (3) senior high school. According to *Inside Education* these three components provide a basic instructional program. The units are self-contained and may

be used by most elementary and high school teachers without the necessity of inservice training.

As the preface to the curriculum plan indicates, "Although most people now recognize the health risks of smoking, many people who use tobacco find it just too difficult to change this habit. The best approach to preventing health problems caused by tobacco use is clearly to prevent the formation of the tobacco habit. This must be a process that begins with young children and continues to adulthood. . . ."

Inquiries regarding the curriculum plan should be directed to Bureau of Drug Education, State Education Department, Albany, New York 12234.

## Peer Counseling Workshop

The Center for Early Adolescence at the University of North Carolina has sponsored a workshop for those educators who would like to implement a training program in peer counseling for young adolescents. The key topics included in the workshop were: the need for group cohesiveness; confidentiality; skills for observing behavior; questioning; verbal and nonverbal attending; leading group discussions; decision making in a counseling model. The Center chose Barbara Varenhorst as workshop leader. Varenhorst is consulting psychologist and founder/director of the Peer Counseling Program, Palo Alto California Unified School District. Further information is available by writing the Center for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina, Suite 223, Carr Mill Mall, Carrboro, North Carolina 27510.

## Aging Education

A Clearinghouse for Elementary and Secondary Aging Education has been launched in recognition of a growing need among educators for a communications network and educational resource dealing specifically with teaching about aging and the aged in the public schools. B. J. Allen

of Florida State University and John W. Myers of Tennessee Technological University started the clearinghouse at Tennessee Technological University.

Services provided by the clearinghouse for its participants are:

1. Listing of participants throughout the country, along with information on their work, both past and present. This puts persons working on similar projects in touch with each other.
2. A semi-annual Technical Assistance Brief (TAB), through the Tennessee Commission on Aging, which focuses on public school aging education. This public action program summarizes the state of the field with recent significant developments and reviews of new curriculum materials.
3. Assistance for persons seeking information on work completed or in progress, availability of curricular materials, or other questions concerning public school aging education.
4. Copyright infringement considered, copying and mailing of certain hard-to-acquire curriculum materials.

The success of the clearinghouse depends on the response of its clientele. Participants in the program are asked to share their work and ideas and to keep the clearinghouse informed of their progress. The clearinghouse is a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among its participants.

For additional information, contact John W. Myers, Director, CESAE, Box 5112, Tennessee Tech University, Cookeville, Tennessee 38501.

## Social Studies Fairs

To give added attention to social studies, the State Department of Education in cooperation with the West Virginia Council for Social Studies, has initiated a program of annual social studies fairs. According to the *County Superintendents' Newsletter*, published by the West Virginia Department of Education, the fairs rang-

ing from classroom displays through state exhibition involved more than 10,000 students during 1979. Lydia McCue, curriculum development specialist in social studies for the department, said, "More than half the counties have expressed interest in conducting fairs this year."

The fair is an activity that provides the setting for projects for students in grades four through 12 where they "choose topics from one of the social studies areas and complete inquiry displays concerning those topics." McCue wants to be sure that social studies maintains its position in the curriculum. She says, "What can be more basic than examining one's own heritage, learning love for democracy, understanding fair play and equality, or learning about all those facets that have made America a leader in the world?"

Fairs are said to achieve several important purposes:

- They involve students in participatory experiences in social studies.
- They help students to see there are a number of ways to research a topic.
- They teach organizational skills for putting the accumulated information into a meaningful pattern.
- They provide an activity for all students, not just the intellectual alone.
- They are also an idea exchange for teachers.

Jane Notter, supervisor of social studies in the Cabell County Schools, believes that the fair program is an asset to the social studies curriculum because "it helps to increase interest in social studies. Students choose their own topics and the process encourages the kinds of things we like to see taught, like the problem-solving, inquiry-oriented approach."

### Hotline Between Wyoming and D.C.

It's that time of the week. The

call will come at 10:30 from the nation's capitol. Three students are gathered around the phone. "Good morning, Senator Wallop," said the senior student from Hot Springs County High School, "This is Patty Mills. I would like to ask why the U.S. Congress has failed to enact a national energy policy since 1973?"

"That just happens to be a very good question, young lady. Let me see if I can answer it," said the U.S. senator. Malcolm Wallop, Wyoming's senior senator, was again on the hotline from Washington, D.C. to the county high school in Thermopolis, Wyoming.

### Annual Conference Guidelines

The Florida Council of Teachers of Mathematics has recently compiled a set of guidelines for annual conferences. According to the *NCTM Bulletin for Leaders*, a monthly publication of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the guidelines, written for conferences of up to 1,000 participants, include practical suggestions and use NCTM name-of-site guidelines as a resource.

A copy of the *Guidelines for Annual Conferences* is available from Betty K. Lichtenberg, University of South Florida, College of Education 307G, Tampa, Florida 33620. Any affiliate group may secure a copy free, but others who are interested should inquire about the cost of the publication.

### Writing Has a Place in Math Class

"Every mathematics teacher should provide for writing experiences in the classroom." Margaret Watson, writing in the *Oklahoma Educator* published by the Oklahoma State Department of Education, feels that "a mathematics teacher must make a place for writing."

After explaining to her Algebra II classes how to solve a quadratic equation by completing the square, she asked them to write a paragraph in a journal. They were instructed to

use as the first line "Today in Algebra II we learned to complete the square." Then they were to explain how to complete the square.

The next day the students' journals were returned with a personal comment on each paper. After going over the assignment, they were asked to write again. This time they were to begin the paper with "The problem I had with completing the square was. . . ." Margaret Watson reports that when the students explained their problems in the journals, she was able to provide answers on an individual basis.

A couple of days later when she was busy at the beginning of the class with several routine things, she gave the students another opportunity to write. This time no topic was specified. The students surprised her by writing a page or two about many different topics.

This two-way conversation has been beneficial to the class. Margaret says, "The students realize I hear them and care. They seem to have looked inside themselves and to have seen what they could do to help solve their problems dealing with Algebra II." In summary she reports, "The journal writing technique, as I have used it, gives the students an opportunity to organize their ideas about a mathematics lesson, to zero in on the problems they are having with the lesson, and to feel that the teacher is interested in them personally."

### Survey Supports Foreign Language Study

A recent study conducted by the University of Michigan Research Center found most Americans have little knowledge of foreign languages; however, about half of those surveyed indicated that they would like to have greater knowledge. While such countries as China, Japan, Russia, and the Middle Eastern countries are having great economic and political impact on us, only 1.5 percent of our population is familiar with those languages. Nevertheless, the study found that

American attitudes are positive toward language study. Around 84 percent of the people with children were encouraging them to study a language. Also, those who had studied another language reported that they had found it worthwhile. People indicated that the need for foreign language was going to be greater in the future.

The study found that there was support for offering foreign language in grade school and 90 percent believed that it should be taught in junior and senior high schools. However, only around 38 percent wanted it required for admission and/or graduation from college. For 90 percent of those interviewed, English was the language of the home when they were children, and only two percent reported growing up in a home where English and another language were spoken equally. Another four percent stated that a language other than English was predominant in their homes—usually Spanish.

The study found that while 75 percent of those reporting could not read, write, or speak a language other than English, 40 percent claimed to have some knowledge of a second language and 15 percent were familiar with two foreign languages. Other interesting statistics were that 45 percent stated they would like to learn another language; 54 percent believed that knowing another language increased reading and writing skills in English; and around 75 percent claimed that it helped a person understand people from other countries.

### Innovative Secondary Schools

A resource book identifying innovative secondary schools willing to share materials and experience is available from the Wisconsin R&D Center. According to their newsletter, the 135-page book titled *Profiles of Selected Innovating Secondary Schools* describes 23 senior high schools and 31 middle and junior high schools from across the U.S. that share a common interest in individualizing instruction. Each school description includes a general picture of some of the

school practices and a "most interesting features" section. Most schools have locally developed materials available.

Inquiries about the book (\$4.75) should be sent to Center Document Service, 1025 West Johnson Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

### Key Curriculum Issues of the 1980s

"The pervading issue of the 1980s will be re-assessing the goals of education." According to the *FASCD Newsletter*, this was the result of the statewide attention given to this question by the membership of the Florida Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. "This is not a new issue, but in the 1980s some new emphases will be needed." These will include:

- Preparation for living in the future including processes associated with stress and crisis management;
- Concern for values associated with environment and economics;
- Preparation for living in a global society with a recognition of the importance for humanity around the world;
- Focus on the individual with an emerging concern for the "near gifted."

The cooperative activity of many educative groups and agencies will be needed. Schools, homes, and various community groups will have to find ways to work together toward these ends.

The Florida ASCD statement indicates that education will need to be strengthened in a variety of ways including:

- State assessment broadened to cover more responsibilities of schools;
- Positive use made of technology;
- Improved supervision of instruction.

These issues and concerns will be used in formulating the Florida ASCD programs in future months.

### Gray Power in Our Schools

Why should we recruit older, retired Americans to work in our schools as volunteers? John Alden, National School Volunteer Program, answers this question by saying, "To improve instruction, to improve public confidence, to generate taxes to get the budget approved." In an article in *The School Administrator*, he is quoted as saying that "Gray Power" can greatly enhance school programs but it must be aggressively sought.

School people can approach business retirement pools, visit retirement centers and communities, use the media for recruitment, and offer older persons recognition and rewards for their services provided on a volunteer basis to our schools. In return school people can offer lunch programs, city and metro tours, and plan special recognition ceremonies for the volunteers.

Alden believes that growing numbers of gray power volunteers will result in greater student motivation, performance, and sense of responsibility. It will reduce student dropout rates as well.

The publications *Volunteers in Education: Future Public Policy and Guidelines for Involving Older School Volunteers* are available from the National School Volunteer Program, 300 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

### Art for Hearing Impaired

Monroe Elementary in Oklahoma City is using art as a natural communication tool and mode of expression for hearing-impaired and deaf children. The district arts coordinator provides inservice for the teachers who are working with these children. Art is used to motivate, reinforce and explain, and also provides the children with ways to express themselves.

Because classes of hearing impaired students and nonhandicapped pupils are often brought together to share art experiences, the method also serves as a mainstreaming procedure. Some nonhandicapped pupils learn

sign language so they can communicate better with the hearing impaired children. Sign language classes are provided for parents and other interested adults as well as pupils.

Successful activities have been: following up reading assignments by drawing illustrative pictures; planning a decorative design for an old bathtub; and using art to introduce pupils to new words and concepts which are not found in sign language.

### Survival Economics

After more than two years of planning and an intensive two-week summer curriculum writing effort by three teachers, a new course called "Survival Economics" was offered in Bedford (Ohio) High School. The course was team-taught by three teachers representing the business education department and the social studies department. According to an article in the *OASCD Journal*, "No longer could the community say, 'Our young people don't know how to reconcile their bank account'; or 'High school graduates don't even know how to fill out a job application form.'"

The course may be summarized briefly as follows:

*Survival Economics* — grade 12, one semester — This course is designed to prepare the student to make well-reasoned decisions as a buyer, money manager, and employee. Insurance, banking, budgeting, job applications, and product information are some of the topics to be explored. Credit may be granted for business education or social studies electives.

Major instructional units are outlined as follows: Unit IA — Introduction to Economics; Unit IB — Needs/Values Clarification; Unit IC — Decision Making; Unit ID — Career Education; Unit IIA — Art of Buying; Unit IIB — Warranties; Unit IIC — Contracts; Unit IID — Consumer Protection; Unit IIIA — Money Management; Unit IIIB — Insurance; Unit IVA — Current Issues; Unit IVB — Job Seeking.

Betty B. McBane, department

leader, business education, Bedford High School, indicates that the course has been very popular with senior students. She says, "Survival economics is an exciting course to teach to high school seniors. With graduation and adult responsibilities close at hand, the majority of the students enrolled in the course are interested and responsive. Our goal is to help them learn to manage their money and their future, rather than having money and circumstances manage them."

### Students Assist Firefighters

The York (Nebraska) Fire Department has involved high school students in an unusual program. Students have received training in firefighting and rescue techniques while strengthening the department's force.

The York Fire Department consists of seven paid firefighters. Supplementing the paid personnel are 35 volunteers of which 10 are part of a Junior Volunteer Program. The Junior Volunteers range in age from 16-18 and are usually juniors and seniors from the local high school. To be a member, they must be in the designated age group, maintain a specified grade point average in high school, have both parents' written permission, and be accepted into the volunteer department for a six-month probationary period. They must also be affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America through which they are insured under the Scouts Explorer Program.

The fire department's paid staff are very supporting of the Junior Volunteers. The volunteers take a considerable amount of work off the regular firefighters. The volunteers are allowed to ride the trucks inside the cabs, and they handle exterior hose lines and carry on all the necessary functions of a volunteer firefighter except entering a burning building. They attend monthly training sessions, learn how to operate all pieces of equipment, and train on the rescue squad.

Many of the volunteers are trained in medical emergencies, and each year they attend Nebraska's State Fire School. Some of the volunteers have gone on to become regular firefighters. Persons interested in additional information about the program may contact Whitmore, York Fire Department, 8th and Grant, York, Nebraska.

### An Alternative to Mandated Minimum Competency Exams

In contrast to the 37 states that have mandated minimum competency testing in schools, Minnesota has taken an alternative approach. The problem of assessment has been assigned to local school districts, and the results have been promising. In 1976, the Minnesota legislature passed a law requiring a planning evaluation report starting August 1979. This calls for each district to examine its curricula and develop an evaluation report that includes a plan for program improvement. Each district is to set up its own policies and goals, and the department of education is to provide a guiding hand for the districts.

Minnesota has been involved in assessment since 1973. School districts may use minimum competency tests if they wish — test instruments provided by the department of education. These voluntary options have promoted curriculum change in the school districts, and early results indicate that the process is contributing to improved student achievement. The Minnesota alternative is a program to watch, for if it can demonstrate how curriculum can be improved without the endless problems of a statewide mandated competency testing program, all schools would benefit.

### New York Promoting a New Adult Education Concept

The study circle concept, which has been used in Sweden for years, is being investigated by New York

State Education Department. In Sweden more than a third of the adult population participates in this type of learning activity. The Education Department, using a grant from the Rockefeller Fund, will study the potential of the circles and work with groups already sponsoring them in this country. The objective is to determine if there is a larger role that study circles can play to help the increasing number of adults who want to learn and to expand the number of adults who are reached by education.

In the past, study-circle plans have been used in this country in the form of great books programs, Bible study groups, and other such programs. However, they have not played a major role in our society as they have in Scandinavia. The study circle in Scandinavia is a highly structured, nonformal system of popular adult education. People with a common interest join together to study any subject they wish with a leader whose primary function is to stimulate discussion. The objective of the program is mutual understanding and learning, and the groups usually are made up of between five to 20 people.

While the groups usually work from prepared materials planned specifically for the use of study circles, there is no established body of knowledge to be covered, no learning outcome to be achieved, no examination, and no grade. Classes are set at the convenience of the participants who meet in homes, churches, and classrooms. Costs are held to a minimum because the study leader is a facilitator and not a professional instructor. Most of the materials are re-used by the study circles to hold down expenses.

### **Alternative Schools: Education by Choice**

Alternative schools or alternative programs within the public school establishment are clearly burgeoning today. Professionals look to them with mixed feelings, however. For

some this movement is a way to survive, perhaps, the threat of the voucher proposals. Others see it as a means to satisfy parental wishes for their children. Some believe it is a kind of professional "cop out." We know some conditions essential to sound learning, yet we offer crucial choices regarding learning settings to uninformed laypersons. Most are uncertain about the motives and probable results of the alternative education movement.

Writing in the *FASCD Journal*, published by the Florida Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Kenneth G. Michaels provides some positive illumination on this "movement," "trend," "innovation," "fad," "novelty," "reform," "renewal," "evolution," and "change strategy." He asserts, "Whatever its name, it's here and growing; very much alive and well within the public school systems of the nation."

According to the National Consortium for Options in Education, an alternative is defined as "any school (or mini school) within a community that provides alternative learning experiences to the conventional school program and is available by choice to every family within the community at no extra cost." Michaels, an elementary school principal in Dade County, believes that "What is most significant is not the particular set of alternatives that exists, but the basic philosophical belief in providing choices as to how parents and students interface with the process of schooling."

Some advantages of an alternative school program include the following:

1. *Parental satisfaction.* Students usually attend schools by accident of geography — that is, local attendance boundaries. A chance to choose the program for their children would go a long way toward generating a high level of community support and involvement in the schools.

2. *Teacher satisfaction.* There are many excellent teachers whose teaching style may not be matched

with that of the program in which they are working. "To give teachers a choice as to the nature of the program in which they wish to work could raise the level of dedication and commitment to their jobs and pupils."

3. *Student satisfaction.* A long-sought goal in education has been to more closely match the learning style of the student to the instructional mode utilized. "The opportunity to choose (with parent involvement) the kind of school (or program) they want to attend has caused students to be more interested and motivated."

### **Should Scientific Research Be Supported?**

Recently, National Assessment of Education Progress made a study of young people's attitudes toward science. The study supplemented the 1977 study of general science knowledge and skills which had included 80,000 students at the ages 9, 13, 17; and 1,300 adults between 26 and 35. The findings of the supplemental study have many contradictions. While the majority of teenaged students support scientific research, about 60 percent of the adults and 17-year-olds and 46 percent of the 13-year-olds believe that science has been the cause of many or most of society's difficulties.

The results indicated that attitudes toward science are more positive among nine-year-olds than in the teenage groups. In the nine-year-olds, 70 percent have positive feelings about their science experiences in school and 66.6 percent like the idea of being a scientist. However, in 13- and 17-year-olds only around 50 percent are favorable to science instruction and to being a scientist.

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