

# News Notes

BY BOB L. TAYLOR AND ROBERT C. MCKEAN

■ **PRE-KINDERGARTEN** gains last to the third grade. A longitudinal study of the long-term effects of preschool programs for disadvantaged children, directed by Leon A. Rosenberg of Johns Hopkins University, demonstrated that after four years the children in the experimental program continued to perform well above the level of similar children whose earliest schooling was regular kindergarten classes.

An interim report on the third-grade reading levels of the children who participated in the experimental program showed an average grade equivalent reading score of 3.6 on the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*. Of the children tested, 72 percent scored at a level appropriate for third graders and 43 percent scored at 4.0 or above.

On the other hand, children from the control group who had not participated in the preschool program had an average score of 1.9 and only 4 percent of these children were reading at grade level.

The performance of the children from the experimental programs was also measured in terms of school placement. In the study group, 8 percent of the children were retained in an earlier grade and 3 percent were placed in special education programs. In the control group, 25 percent were retained in an earlier grade and 15 percent were placed in special education.

The experimental and control groups were closely matched on the variables of age, sex, race, socioeconomic status, level of intellectual development before entering school, and mother's age and education.

The findings of the interim report indicated that the Maryland educational programs for "high risk" four year olds produced levels of academic achievement that were impressive in terms of comparison with those of the control group and with the national norms of the tests used. The study will follow the children through elementary school to determine the

lasting effects of preschool programs on disadvantaged children.

■ **JOHNNY LEARNS** to write what we teach him. Previewing the New York State Basic Competency Test in Writing results, Cecelia M. Kingston wrote in *Impact on Instructional Improvement*, published by the New York State Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, about several items which gave cause for thought:

—Why does a student write 20 sentences in isolation relatively well and then write five sentences on one topic so poorly?

—Why does a student's content, style, and mechanical accuracy deteriorate when he/she is asked to write more than one sentence about a topic?

—Why does a student who gives evidence of being able to follow directions on one part of a test seem not to have even understood the task on another part?

—Why is a student more eloquent when he/she does not have to develop an idea beyond one sentence?

—Why does a student capable of writing individual sentences not demonstrate ability to write simple paragraphs?

—Why does a student who spells *it's* correctly on the test fail to spell *it's* correctly when using it in a paragraph?

"Is it possible that Johnny cannot write because we do not teach him to write? Is it possible that Johnny has indeed learned what we teach him?" Our classroom efforts are aimed at teaching the writing of short sentences that begin with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark. Our tests show that Johnny has learned what we have taught. Kingston concludes, "If we want Johnny [or Jane] to generate more than simple sentences, carefully punctuated and clearly expressed, then we will have to teach him [her] to write."

■ **"THERE IS A WAR** on testing," says George H. Hanford, President

of the College Board. "But more than that, there is an open assault on the admission process that the Board and its members have developed together—a process that emphasized ability and achievement and helped to lessen the effects of ethnic, economic, and geographic circumstances as we sought to equalize educational opportunity in this country."

Testing people, of course, are reeling from the impact of a barrage of attacks from many quarters. Hanford reminds us that 1980 began with the Nader/Nairn report in mid-January. The NEA mailing of a political action kit designed to discredit and eliminate standardized tests and help teachers campaign for legislation to control testing, stepped-up legislative activity, a number of anti-testing articles in national magazines, and the continued appearances by critics on influential TV shows—all are a part of a movement which he characterizes as a war on testing.

The College Board believes that the SAT performs an important function in the admissions process. Indeed, Hanford points out that "Thousands of validity studies prove that the SAT increases predictive efficiency by 40 to 50 percent when it is used in *helping* to estimate first-year college grades. . . ." In addition to the high school grades, the SAT provides a strong and useful increment in the process.

"Testing the Tests" is adapted from a speech given by George H. Hanford and is published in *Commentaries on Testing*, a series of reports on testing issues published by the College Board. Copies may be obtained from College Board Publication Orders, Box 2815, Princeton, NJ 08541.

■ **A NEW CURRICULUM** in mathematics for science is being field-tested in ten secondary schools in Connecticut according to the *Bulletin for Leaders*, published by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The plan consists of a text and laboratory manual aimed at the

non-honors student. This curriculum stresses understanding of proportional calculations and takes most of its examples from real-life activities.

Information and a free newsletter may be secured from William Boelke, Department of Applied Mathematics, Central Connecticut State College, New Britain, CT 06050.

■ **IF TEACHERS FOSTERED** pupils' intuitive problem-solving skills, they might be better at solving mathematical problems. Three mathematics education researchers reached this conclusion in a study done at the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Individualized Schooling.

In the study, 43 first-grade pupils who had not received any instruction in formal arithmetic computation were requested to solve a number of verbal problems representing basic addition and subtraction computations. While most of the pupils were able to work the problems correctly, they used a variety of strategies based on their analyses of the problems. According to James Moser of the University of Wisconsin—Madison, older students, when given a verbal problem, frequently look for a rule to apply the computations skills they have been taught and are less likely to think through a problem than the uninstructed pupils.

The research team speculates that because symbolic addition and subtraction are taught prior to verbal problems, these pupils have no reason to use their natural intuition in solving verbal problems. Another of the researchers, Thomas Carpenter, argues that pupils' natural problem-solving skills are being bypassed.

The research suggests that pupils will be better problem solvers if verbal problems are taught first and then, based on these experiences, symbolic addition and subtraction are taught.

Part of a three-year analysis of how children learn beginning mathematical skills, the study is funded by the National Institute of Education. For additional information, write to James Moser, Wisconsin Center, 1025 W. Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53706.

■ **THE LOS ANGELES** school district has introduced the year-round plan in 39 elementary and six junior

high schools as a means of relieving overcrowded conditions. In 35 elementary schools, the 45/15 schedule (45 teaching days followed by 15 vacation days) is followed while in the remaining ten elementary and junior high schools the 90/30 schedule (90 teaching days followed by 30 vacation days) is used.

The program, part of the district's desegregation plan, calls for dividing each school's enrollment into four groups and adopting a staggered schedule whereby only three groups are in school at any given time. A fourth group is always on vacation. All schools, including regular and year-round schools, will be on break during the traditional winter recess, scheduled December 22-January 2; however, only regular schools will have the traditional spring vacation.

■ **THE WISCONSIN R&D** Center has published *Community Relations for Schools* by M. Lynn Karges and B. Dean Bowles. The 150-page guide describes how schools may develop a model community relations program. The basic elements of a community relations program identified in the guide are: assessing needs, planning the program, implementing the program, and evaluating the program. The work, including 33 sample materials from effective community relations programs, was developed from actual school experience and studies conducted by the R&D Center's home-school-community relations project. Copies are available for \$4.75 from the Center Document Service, 1025 West Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53706. Check or purchase order must accompany order.

■ **OYSTER RIVER HIGH** School (Nurham, NH) and York High School (York, ME) are the locations for the development of an interdisciplinary study of the marine environment which relates mathematics, science, history, language, social studies, art, and music. Under the direction of Michael Andrew and Eleanor Milliken, teams of teachers and students planned the program.

According to an article in *The Core Teacher*, published by the National Association for Core Curriculum, Inc., the aim of the project is to encourage students to investigate the natural and social history of the area, to become aware of the importance of

local marine resources, to acquire an informed and open mind about coastal management practices, and to share their knowledge with others. The curriculum involves extensive field studies. Students make films, slide-tapes, field guides, TV and planetarium programs, and other teaching-learning materials for use by other students.

The developers have chosen to use the acronym **ASHORE** to designate the project. This stands for "A Science-Humanities Oceanographic Response to Education." Information regarding the curriculum project is available from William Sowers, Assistant Superintendent, Oyster River Cooperative School District, Somersworth, NH 03878.

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## Information Resources

BY FRED ROSENAU

■ **WHAT PERCENTAGE** of the children in your schools comes from one-parent families? And what percentage of those are low achievers? How do they compare with other children in terms of tardiness, truancy, and discipline? The findings from a continuing nationwide study may astonish you and may cause you to begin thinking about what needs to be done by administrators, counselors, and teachers to identify and help these students. The study, conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and /I/D/E/A/, cautions that "one-parent children are at risk both in their personal lives and . . . in their schooling. . . . These children require far more help and attention from the school than they currently receive." Perhaps you'll be surprised to discover that 20 percent of children in elementary school and 15 percent in secondary school live in one-parent families. The study directors believe that the first step for schools is a frequently updated recordkeeping system that can keep track of changes in student family status. Another recommendation is that conferences with the custodial parent be held at the parent's convenience, without causing

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