

News Notes

ROBERT C. MCKEAN AND BOB L. TAYLOR

■ INTERDISCIPLINARY UNITS, developed by teachers at Rupert A. Nock Middle School, Newburyport, Massachusetts, include the following:

A sixth grade unit on ancient Greece correlates learnings in science, social studies, language arts, mathematics, music, art, and home economics, and leads to "The Greek Week." Students in the unit learn how to make cheese and take a walking tour of the community to look for Greek influences in architecture, among other planned activities.

A seventh grade guidance unit includes a look at personal values, strengths and weaknesses, and an exploration of careers. During the career study each student spends a day observing and interviewing an adult at work.

A science-language arts unit entitled Project RUSO (Rupert Space Operation) combines science fiction and science facts with supplemental activities involving music, art, and mathematics. Students are divided into small groups representing imaginary nations and engage in a "space race." Spelling and vocabulary words are drawn from the unit and students read such books as *War of the Worlds* by Wells and *A Wrinkle in Time* by L'Engle. A variety of science experiments are carried out.

Further information is available from either Kathy Straubel or Edward Carter at Rupert A. Nock Middle School, Newburyport, MA 01950.

■ INTERESTED IN TIME travel? Gail Bechler's second grade class (Wall Lake Community School, Iowa) attended the one-room, country school at the Sac City (Iowa) fairgrounds and traveled back 100 years in time. In preparation, the class studied the history, schools, foods, games, and clothing of the 1880s. Dressed in clothing of the time, the students used hand slates and old McGuffey readers, brought their lunches in pails, carried water, and used outdoor toilets.

Even the lunches were authentic; they included a cold roast chicken,

boiled eggs, and fruit in old jars and excluded potato chips, pop, or candy bars. At noon recess, they played hide-and-seek, fruit basket upset, and wood tag.

■ NEW YORK REGENTS have approved proposals which, when implemented, would include entry-level examinations for teachers, administrators, and supervisors; a one-year internship under closely supervised conditions for all new teachers; an annual performance review for all teachers and administrators; and inservice education supported by special categorical state aid. Specific details are to be developed by the Education Department in consultation with the Teacher Education, Certification, and Practices Board, and it is estimated that full administration of the teacher testing program will come in the spring of 1983.

Each district may be required to develop a plan which specifies procedures for conducting an annual performance review.

The proposals emphasize the importance of inservice education for teachers, administrators, and supervisors. Categorical state aid for this purpose would be provided to local school districts as part of the regular state aid formula.

For further information, write to: Arnold M. Bloom, Director of the Office of Public Information, or Chris Carpenter, Assistant Director of the Office of Public Information, State Education Department, Office of Public Information, Albany, NY 12234.

■ INDEPENDENT CHILDREN excel in cognitive growth according to recent studies by Educational Testing Service (ETS). Forty families with an only child aged 3½-4½ and 80 families with a middle child aged 3½-4½ were studied to determine the influence of family size and structure, parental income and educational level, parental beliefs, and child-rearing practices upon the children's cognitive abilities.

Each parent participated in two exercises with the child. First, the parent told the child a simple story. Then, the parent taught the child how to fold a piece of paper into a boat or an airplane. Finally, the children were given seven tasks designed to test their representational competence (the ability to anticipate, plan, and use imagery as a tool of thought) and their problem-solving competence.

It was concluded that children whose parents used distancing strategies which demanded that they reconstruct past events, use their imagination, and plan future actions, had more highly developed representational skills and were better problem solvers than those whose parents simply told them what to do.

Parents were more likely to use distancing strategies if they believed that children should be allowed to experiment until they find a solution to a problem rather than being told how to solve it.

Fathers were more consistent in their use of distancing strategies than mothers. Even mothers who believed in these strategies quickly abandoned them when immediate results were not obtained. Therefore, the findings showed a stronger relationship between the fathers' beliefs about child development and the types of strategies used when instructing a child.

The impacts of income, education, and child-spacing were also examined. Children from working class families with near-spacing (less than three years) between siblings and children from middle-class families with far-spacing (over three years) between siblings were similar to one another and different from other groups in that they performed at higher levels on problem-solving tasks. Parents from these groups expressed stronger beliefs that children gain knowledge through their own experimentation than did parents from other groups.

It was concluded that these similarities came from different factors. The middle-class parents were

thought to rely more heavily upon literature by experts who encourage independent thinking in children. On the other hand, the working class parents were thought to believe in the independent exploratory nature of children because their children must be self-reliant out of necessity.

For further information, contact: Irving Sigel (D) ETS, Princeton, NJ 08541.

■ "INSTALLING INSTANT programs [for the gifted] is about like touching a match to flammable materials. The results are dramatic, colorful, and dangerous," says Rita Bryant, writing in the TASCD Newsletter (published by the Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). There are several key questions which must be answered before a full scale program for the gifted is put into action. These include:

- Who has planned? How much?
- Who is aware? To what extent?
- Who is oriented? To what degree?
- Who is prepared? For what?

Bryant believes that the chief administrator responsible for curriculum development should have a systems approach design *on paper* three years prior to the beginning of classroom instruction. Development of the plan through the involvement of key people—teachers, administrators, community representatives—requires at least a school year.

A two-year series of informative, interesting staff development sessions is probably minimal for developing community and staff awareness. The teachers and principals who indicate their willingness to work with the gifted must be oriented to the processes of nurturing giftedness. Travel visitation money, stipends for teachers to participate in university courses and curriculum development workshops, and substitute teacher pay needed to release the selected teachers to attend training sessions are obvious requirements.

According to Rita Bryant, "When a program is found to be floundering, the cause frequently can be traced to inadequacy either in planning or developing understanding on the part of people who should be aware, oriented, or prepared." She continues, "Reasons and excuses abound,

but the fact remains that time is needed. Instructional leaders can help other school personnel realize the importance of developing quality-level plans and having the time in which to do so."

Education for Pluralism

MAX ROSENBERG AND
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■ TEXTBOOKS PLAY a major role in the education of children. "Depending on a number of factors, the 'latent content' of curricular materials has been shown to affect a child's attitudes, personality development, behavior, and academic and occupational achievement." This is the conclusion reached by the U.S. Commission for Civil Rights in its report *Characters in Textbooks: A Review of the Literature* (1980).

According to the report, "Research has shown that the development of a child's self-esteem, values, aspirations, and fears may be either assisted or inhibited by the content of textbooks."

Textbooks serve "as the society's officially prescribed and endorsed transmitters of knowledge." Negatively or positively, textbooks constitute powerful tools of learning.

The report is available from the U.S. Commission for Civil Rights, 1121 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005.

■ "BROADLY SPEAKING, the aim of intercultural education is to prepare students to cope with global interdependence and cultural pluralism which involve relationships, events, and forces that cannot be contained within old national or cultural boundaries or fit old definitions of how cultural and ethnic groups relate to each other."

This statement is one of the high points in the 1980 publication titled *Intercultural Education*. Written by David S. Hoopes, it is one of the Phi Delta Kappa series of pamphlets known as fastbacks.

The 38-page booklet reviews aspects of intercultural education—in-

struction, cultural awareness, terminology, process, priorities, and aims, including a model.

Hoopes suggests that educational systems have "increasingly attempted to prepare people to transcend local culture and to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to be effective in a modern society." However, he also notes that in addition to education there are other powerful influences upon the individual—the media, family, peer groups, and personal experiences.

Perhaps most important, says Hoopes, is the teacher's attitude. The teacher should "model both tolerance of and respect for other cultures." He or she should think globally and "have a sense of being a part of an interdependent world."

The address of Phi Delta Kappa is Eighth and Union Streets, Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402.

■ BOSTON'S SCHOOLS are better than they have ever been, according to Jonathan Kozol.

How is that possible, when the Boston Public Schools are applying a court-ordered desegregation plan? Kozol answers this question in his article, "The Rebirth of Education in Boston," in the June 1980 issue of *American Education*.

Kozol reviews the events in Boston in the early days of desegregation in 1974 up to the present when "the schools have achieved a racial harmony unknown in Boston's recent history."

What has begun to make school desegregation work in Boston? "Without question," states Kozol, "it was the efforts of an inspired federal judge, W. Arthur Garrity, a man who had the sense to know that if you mandate 'racial justice,' you had better mandate excellence and parent participation too."

Creation of 22 magnet schools, establishment of parent councils, involvement of universities, cultural institutions, and business interests, upgrading of teaching talent, appointment of better principals—these are some of the changes Kozol describes. He gives special credit to "persistent parents, diligent teachers, and embarrassingly decent kids."

■ A POLITICAL WAR over religion is mounting in the public schools. So reports *Church and State*

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