

News Notes

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■ **SECONDARY SCHOOLS** are doing a reasonably good job for most students of high motivation and ability, but they aren't reaching "the students who see little or no value in formal learning and study." This judgment, says the *Wisconsin R & D Center News*, comes from a study of 70 U.S. high schools conducted by Herbert J. Klausmeier and his associates. To rectify the problem, they have developed the Wisconsin Program for the Renewal and Improvement of Secondary Education (WRISE).

Three symptoms underlie the basic problems of secondary school teaching and learning: (1) low educational achievement and failure to master basic skills; (2) unfavorable attitudes toward learning and schools; and (3) failure to prepare in school for three areas of adult life: productive work and economic independence, citizenship and participation in community affairs, and family life.

The Wisconsin program encourages local schools to identify and maintain what they are doing well while identifying problem areas that need to be attacked cooperatively by school staff, students, and parents. The program offers ten objectives for schools to use in this self-examination. According to Klausmeier, WRISE gives suggestions, not prescriptions, because secondary schools are extremely varied in makeup and student populations. "Each school must identify its own areas of improvement and then carry out its related improvement activities. . . . WRISE is intended to help a school make a successful beginning."

The design, aims, and strategies of WRISE are available in print and AV materials developed with the assistance of practitioners. The program includes a book, ten filmstrips, nine audiotapes, and four printed guides.

For information, write to Wisconsin Program for the Renewal and

Improvement of Secondary Education, Wisconsin R & D Center, 1025 W. Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53706.

■ **FOREIGN LANGUAGE** teachers at the Summit (Ohio) Country Day School are using a new approach to improve their instruction.

According to an article by Edward C. Tyrrell in the Ohio ASCD's newsletter, a study by the school's foreign language department found that students were not gaining the confidence and competence in foreign language that was expected. They discovered that language instruction in the primary grades was very oral—children used puppets, plays, and songs to learn a foreign language orally. Upon entering the middle school, however, students received more formal instruction, using textbooks and reading and writing in the foreign language. Many of the children were not ready for this transition nor mature enough to understand the grammatical structure of the language and apply it. They began to develop poor attitudes; foreign language at Summit became one of the most difficult subjects to teach.

The school called in Reid Baker, Consultant for Foreign Languages in the Ohio Department of Education, and subsequently decided to initiate a Foreign Language Exploratory Program for all 7th graders. These students now study Spanish, French, and German, each for a 12-week period during the school year. Using new and original materials and learning aids, they receive maximum speaking exposure to each target language. They participate in language activities and learn about the history, economy, geography, and social and cultural environment in which each language exists.

According to the language teachers, the program (1) encourages students to develop foreign language skills needed later on in high school

studies; (2) improves articulation in the subject area between middle and upper schools; and (3) provides a foundation for formal language study in the high school.

■ **SAIGON FELL** five years ago. Since then, the U.S. has accepted half a million Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees. Approximately 60,000 have already settled in Southern California and more continue to arrive—almost 1,200 a month in the Los Angeles area alone.

Faced with this influx, the Los Angeles School District, since 1976, has been helping these people start a new life. (It takes from one to three years for a refugee to become self-sufficient.) In addition to offering adult courses in English, the L.A. schools have provided counseling, job training, and job placement for nearly 9,000 refugees in the largest employment training center in the country. Among the most popular vocations selected—machine shop work, welding, and office work.

■ **PARENT CONCERNS** about the philosophy of middle schools has prompted the Peel Board of Education in Mississauga, Canada, a suburb of Toronto, to approve formation of a task force to assess the middle schools, review the policy governing them, identify concerns that require changes, and make recommendations.

The task force will include two trustees, two superintendents, an elementary principal and vice-principal, a secondary principal and vice-principal, the coordinator of elementary education, the chief psychologist, and one representative each from the Educators' Association, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, and the community. They will compare the effectiveness of middle schools with other alternatives; review the background of middle schools and search current literature;

compare attitudes of students graduating from a middle school with those of students graduating from a K-8 school; identify concerns of parents, staff, and students; and examine financial implications, including the construction and operational costs of the middle school.

■ **COACHES** and administrators must take strict safety precautions in order to reduce the risks of law suits based on sports-related injuries. Such precautions, according to Kenneth Clarke, Dean at the University of Illinois, can prevent a plaintiff attorney from accepting cases involving sports injuries. Writing in the *National Federation Press*, Clarke states, "The principal defense against a complaint of negligence is a clear conscience that all reasonable measures were taken to minimize the risk inherent in that sport."

Clarke offers a checklist for administrators who want to cover the basic safety precautions:

1. Each student should have a medical examination when entering a sports program; medical records should be updated annually and supplemented as needed.

2. An athlete's "waiver" of responsibility should be based on his or her full knowledge of the risks involved in the sport. The student should share the responsibility for preventive measures.

3. Anticipate problems and provide a plan of action. Administrators and coaches should know where, when, and to whom athletic injuries might occur.

4. Protect students from the dangers inherent in sports by having them participate in preseason practices; make sure they follow the rules of the game.

5. Use the equipment recommended by rules or authoritative groups in the sport, both in practice and in competition.

6. Make sure facilities are safe; make regular checks on warm-up and game areas.

7. Provide personnel and procedures for obtaining immediate medical care in case an injury occurs in practice or in a game. Everyone should completely understand individual roles and procedures.

8. Keep records about each athlete's participation and injuries and include the waiver form.

9. Justify the benefits and the risks of every sport to the participants.

■ **THREE BUSES** of the Stevens Point (Wisconsin) School District have been converted to burn liquefied petroleum gas instead of gasoline, resulting in savings estimated to be as high as \$1,000 a year per bus.

In an experiment to determine comparative costs of gasoline and LPG, the school district selected buses for conversion for which records were available that documented the cost of operating the buses between 20,000 and 25,000 miles.

Converting each bus to liquefied petroleum gas cost \$950, an amount that could have been reduced. The district, however, wanted the buses to retain the ability to use gasoline. On long trips, in case LPG isn't available for a refill, the driver can simply push a button to switch the bus back to burning gasoline.

Assuming a normal nine-year life for a bus, total savings could amount to \$8,000 after deducting the cost of conversion.

pedagogical problems." NCSS comments: "The ever-present reality is the teacher, interacting with students and deciding, day-by-day and moment-by-moment, what will happen in class."

From NSBA: "Promoting change and determining the direction of curriculum is not . . . simply a question of dollars; the often-divergent interests of a variety of individuals and groups must be taken into account." And from AASA: "The textbook publishing companies provide the curriculum . . . local boards of education and administrators [must] be aware that the purchase of textbooks in a given subject area is the purchase of curriculum, not merely materials."

Finally, the PTA: A problem with overemphasis on basics is "a tendency to teach children only those things for which they will be tested, a tendency that leads to mediocrity."

■ **PARENT-ACTION.** A newsletter that offers views on sex education, family choice, psychological testing, humanism, protection of parent and student rights, and more is yours for the asking. It's *Education Update*, published by Heritage Foundation, 513 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002.

Watch in ERIC for "The Role of Teachers and Other School Practitioners in Decision Making and Innovation" by P. D. Hood and L. R. Blackwell. Sample quote: "Qualitative data . . . suggest that . . . a minority of teachers . . . [may be] repeatedly . . . involved in curriculum decisions and in initiation of educational innovations, and that teacher-initiated innovations tend to be of less importance (in other words, use of a supplementary text), whereas major innovations tend to be initiated and decided on by administrators."

An 80-page catalog for parents, for children and teens, for professionals and others may be obtained from the Office of Human Development Services, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC 20201. Request "Publications of the Office of Human Development Services" (HHS Pub. No. OHDS 80-10008). Included are forms to use when requesting the publications of Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Head Start, Admin-

Information Resources

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■ **FROM THE FIELD.** Not just ASCD, but AAAS, NCSS, NCTM, NSTA, AASA, PTA, NSBA, and the National Academy of Sciences give their opinions in *What Are the Needs of Precollegiate Science, Mathematics, and Social Science Education? Views from the Field*. The 226-page document (SE 80-9) is available from the Directorate for Science Education, National Science Foundation, Washington, DC 20550.

ASCD opines: "Very few people are available outside the classroom to provide quality control for the curriculum and assist teachers with

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