

# News Notes

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■ **BASIC ECONOMIC** concepts are being infused into the regular curriculum with a little help from John Steinbeck, Shakespeare, and other literary greats. Passages from such works as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *East of Eden*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Our Town*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and other novels, plays, short stories, and poems are useful in teaching economic concepts because their authors wrote about life and economics as an important part of life.

This economics infusion project, "Teaching Economics Through Literature and Drama," is supported by a grant from the Louisiana State Department of Education. It is headed by Michael W. Watts and Robert F. Smith of the Center for Economic Education at Indiana and Purdue Universities, and Wanda Thompson of Louisiana State University. They hope the project will help teachers gain confidence in undertaking curriculum projects in economics.

Teacher-training workshops to be conducted this summer in Louisiana will feature short dramatizations on videotape along with explanations of their economic concepts and discussion questions. Students will be asked either to write an ending for the script or create a new drama using the same economic principles in a contemporary setting.

The project directors believe anyone can learn basic economic concepts if they are explained in understandable terms. The project aims at making the process of teaching economics in the classroom easier and more stimulating for teacher and students.

■ **PUBERTY** may interfere with learning unless schools can help students cope with adolescent problems, says Derek Miller, a professor of psychiatry at Northwestern University.

Miller, chief of the adolescent program at the university's Institute of

Psychiatry, discussed the problems of young people and their implications for schools at a meeting of the National Association for Core Curriculum.

Schools serving adolescents are rowdy because the body changes of puberty produce rowdy youngsters, Miller said. The learning situation is tension-producing for these students, who find it difficult to admit they don't know everything. At the same time, they are faced with many tasks that must be mastered before they can successfully enter the adult culture. Our society isn't providing enough tension-relieving activities for these youth, nor is it helping them find adequate ways of coping with their problems, Miller said. To alleviate this situation, he suggested:

— Schools are too large and impersonal; they should be divided into smaller units

— Since having the same subject at the same time every day is boring, class schedules should be varied. When internal tensions are high, the student is easily bored

— Students should have more physical activity

— Schools should make greater use of project teaching, topical units, and other active and creative experiences

— Students should be assigned to the same teacher for about half the day for three years so they can become members of a stable peer group. In such a group, they can relax and learn how to handle "awful people," bad teachers, unpleasant peers, and parents.

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## Education for Pluralism

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MAX ROSENBERG AND  
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■ **FAIR TEXTBOOKS.** *Fair Textbooks: A Resource Guide*, published

by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, organizes, codes, and indexes more than 1,600 textbook evaluation instruments, special issues, publications, research bibliographies, directories, guidelines, statutes, and organizations.

Each section of the 300-page catalog is introduced by a brief description of the types of items, how they were selected, and by whom and how the items might best be used.

"When used critically and creatively," the Commission says, "this collection . . . can contribute . . . to creating educational curricula that fairly and accurately represent the wide diversity of groups in our culture."

The Guide can be bought from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Stock No. 005-000-00-224-9, it costs \$7.50.

■ **MULTICULTURAL.** It's time to stop studying the positive value of multicultural education materials and give the research results to people who can do something about them.

Patricia B. Campbell and Jeana Wirtenberg, writing in the *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, say conducting research isn't enough.

"Research results must be widely circulated and brought to the attention of the people writing, publishing, or purchasing children's books," they say in their article, "How Books Influence Children: What the Research Shows."

"Research to date indicates that books can make a difference, and that they can be an effective tool in reducing racism and sexism in society," the investigators note. Their review of the research shows, "At home and at school, the books that children read are, for the most part, sexist and racist."

Children's attitudes and achievements are much affected by race and sex bias in books. Use of multicultural materials, for the most part, has positive effects, Campbell and Wirtenberg learned, but many multicultural books are just as sexist as the all-white series preceding them.

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