

■ MEDIA CENTERS NEED DIVERSITY

Do the materials in your school media center reflect the cultural diversity and pluralistic nature of American society? Students should find a wide range of materials that will help them explore new places and ideas, meet famous people of the past and present, and develop an awareness of different cultures.

Leslyn Shires, Assistant Superintendent for Library Services, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, points out that the need for current, pluralistic materials is especially great in the elementary school. At that level students develop their life-long enjoyment of libraries.

■ GENETICS MATERIALS DEVELOPED

A Task Force to promote better understanding of human genetics in Washington state's public schools has reviewed curriculum materials and programs in the field and identified educators interested in genetics education.

The Task Force is also field-testing newly developed human genetics curriculum materials for the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS) of Boulder, Colorado. The BSCS materials were developed for use in either health or science classes.

The activity-oriented K-6 program stresses basic ideas of human individuality, variability, and development with implications for genetics.

The junior high/middle school program has a human orientation that replaces more traditional plant and animal studies in life courses, and is designed to match the varying levels of cognitive development and social maturity of students ages 11-14.

The high school module introduces students to both the problems and the potentials of human and medical genetics, such as prenatal diagnosis, genetic counseling, and genetic screening, by including hands-on activities, labora-

tory investigations, and readings in a "magazine" format.

For more information concerning the activities of the Task Force and the field tests contact Roberta Spiro, Genetics Program, 1704 N.E. 150th St., Seattle, WA 98155. Phone: (206)545-6783.

■ FRENCH IMMERSION STUDIES

Canada's immersion programs in French, underway for a decade now, have been carefully evaluated in dozens of studies in Ontario, Quebec, B.C., Manitoba, and elsewhere with consistent results.

English language and other academic skills of immersion students generally do not suffer. While there is a lag in the development of English language skills in grades 1 and 2, once English language arts instruction starts the deficit usually disappears. Hence, by the intermediate grades, students in total immersion programs are no different from their regular program counterparts in academic skills, and they are more proficient in French.

Early French immersion involves non-French-speaking pupils who take all or most of their lessons in French starting with kindergarten and continuing through the elementary grades. While English language arts are introduced in the second or third grade, most instruction is in French. Thousands of pupils in these programs are becoming proficient in French; however, they are not as able as native speakers if they live in English-speaking communities.

A late immersion program has also been tried. Here students in the seventh and eighth grades receive up to 80 percent of their instruction in French regardless of their previous background in the language. This program continues through the secondary school. These programs show the same results as the early immersion programs with increased achievement in French and no loss of English skills as long as some English instruction is continued. Late immersion probably requires more moti-

vation on the part of students than early immersion.

While there is disagreement about whether early or late immersion is preferable, research suggests that early immersion has most long-term benefits in terms of ability in French. Nevertheless, the most important factor in developing skills in French is the amount of time involved. Studies show that a few years of 80 percent French immersion are more effective than several years of 50 percent immersion. Students who have 80 percent to 100 percent of their instruction in French in the elementary grades seem to do as well in English and better in French than those who are in a partial immersion (60-40 program) from the start.

Some reservations should be mentioned about the studies. Since participation in the immersion programs is usually voluntary, immersion may attract more motivated students. Also, evidence indicates that brighter pupils are more likely to select the immersion programs. Both parents and teachers in the new programs probably are more enthusiastic. While these cautions are cited, it was found that lower IQ pupils often pick up French skills with greater ease than was expected.

The Peel Board of Education, Ontario, Canada, has published a Research Bulletin on their early and late immersion programs. The results would interest those working in bilingual education. Information is available from Benjamin Levin, Chief Research Officer, Peel Board of Education, 73 King St., West, Mississauga, Ontario, L5B 1H5. Phone: (416) 279-6010, ext. 326.

■ SUPERVISOR AS DINOSAUR

"Despite their lofty title, supervisors have no SUPER VISION; they have only a muddy corner of surveillance," says Leila Christenbury, an English educator in Cedar Falls, Iowa, writing in *The Iowa Curriculum Bulletin*. Today teachers believe that supervisors are agents of

the administration and "no particular friends of theirs."

Modern supervision calls for the supervisor to be a helping person, a change-agent, working toward the improvement of teaching and learning. The author believes, "All the helping functions . . . go for naught and will not increase trust or confidence when supervisors are called upon to judge professional competence and to recommend reward, demotion, remediation, or dismissal for teachers." Today's supervisor is playing roles that are contradictory and possibly mutually exclusive.

The first step toward dealing with the supervisory mess, asserts Christenbury, would be to abolish the present role of the supervisor as we know it. "Even the name supervisor should be deleted." She would separate the function of evaluating teachers for rating from the function of evaluating teachers for improvement. Summative assessment of teachers would be done by a group of teachers and administrators in accordance with a set of criteria and a procedure developed by the professional staff. The need for instructional improvement would be approached by a "methodology person" who is trained in the purely clinical aspects of supervision. This person would help teachers who request assistance, aid teachers whose evaluations were poor, and coordinate and direct the inservice activities of the school. Christenbury believes, "It would be wise to disassociate this position from the administration and from the teachers alike, making it an intermediary one between the two and not tied to one faction or the other."

Christenbury concludes, "Through a competent administrator fulfilling bureaucratic functions, a board of teachers and administrators evaluating, and a neutral party helping instruction, it would seem that the traditional business of supervising in school systems would be vastly improved, if not mildly revolutionized."

■ CHECK POINTS FOR IMPROVED INSERVICE

Inservice education is mismanaged. Eugene V. Gallelli, writing in the New York State ASCD publication *Impact*, analyzed his experience as participant, observer, and trainer to come up with the "fruitless five" characteristics of inadequate, "go nowhere" inservice:

1. The "nobody-can-tell-anybody-

why-the-training-is-being-held-in-the-first-place," syndrome

2. Participants treated like recorders with no play-back capabilities for sharing impressions and/or reactions

3. The "Hi-I'm-the-instructor-let's-sign-up-for-presentations-so-you-can-teach-the-rest-of-the-course" model

4. Lack of a clear delineation of the skills and knowledge participants are expected to acquire as a result of the training sessions

5. Lack of a realistic opportunity to utilize those skills to be acquired in a productive and beneficial experience.

The author, presently a coordinator of instruction and elementary school principal, offers key check points for improved inservice education as follows:

1. Communicate a "reason for being"

2. Describe, discuss, and distribute the desired outcomes (objectives) of the training

3. Promote an atmosphere of success

4. Reinforce each participant's commitment to the training or its applications in subsequent programs by differentiating some of the activities to satisfy individual needs

5. Make available the information and resources necessary for achieving success

6. Be constantly aware of the variety of preferred learning styles that exist in individuals and vary the workshop activities accordingly

7. If the training is directed, wholly or in part, at developing new or innovative programs and/or educational changes, spend time predicting the "road blocks" that might arise or already exist

8. Leave the participants a little "hungry"

9. Encourage participants to spread the word

10. Strive for an atmosphere that encourages open, honest interaction

11. Follow up and assist teachers in implementing their newly developed skills and competencies in the classroom.

Gallelli concludes, "Carefully thought out inservice education, with all its headaches, hard work, and frustrations, remains one undeniable key to program success. More often than not, the talent for planning and conducting

successful inservice workshops exists, often in large numbers, within the confines of the school itself."

Research on Teaching

JANET FLEGG EATON

■ WHAT DO STUDENTS LEARN FROM SEATWORK?

First-graders think they do seatwork primarily to get it done. "This is just our work," most say when asked to explain why they're doing a particular assignment.

A recent study reporting that elementary students spend up to 70 percent of their instructional time doing seatwork led IRT researchers Linda Anderson, Gerald Duffy, Nancy Brubaker, and Jan Alleman-Brooks to observe eight first-grade classrooms in four Title I schools. While data collection and analysis are not complete, some preliminary findings have emerged.

Students seem oriented to "content coverage" rather than "content mastery." Whether this is desirable is not known.

The researchers noted that few teachers' instructions "included specific statements about the content-related purposes of assignments." Instead, teachers focused on telling the children exactly what to do. "In addition," said Anderson, "teacher feedback following completion of work often consisted of statements about the correctness of answers and directions for what to do next, but not reminders about the purpose. . . ." It is not yet known whether a change in teacher behavior would change student perceptions of seatwork purposes.

Although students often don't understand their seatwork, some (although not all) low achievers develop strategies for finishing. For example, they learn to copy the right words off the board or to ask their neighbors the right questions. The researchers suspect that some low achievers are used to not understanding seatwork, and thus don't think a lack of understanding on any particular assignment unusual enough to warrant action. Anderson and her colleagues will study

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