

various computer types are reserved for primary, elementary, and secondary school populations.

While more parents are purchasing their own computers, increasing use among other students has meant the school will add to hardware as finances allow. Greater attention to software evaluation projects is also being planned as this innovative project expands. Future plans also hope to make this library service available to community members who have no children in the school.

#### Reference

Savage, Earl R. "A Computer Library." *Technological Horizons in Education Journal* 2,2 (October 1983): 121-122.

#### Junior High Mastery Learning a Popular Success

Master learning at Reed Junior High School in Loveland, Colorado, has proven highly successful in the mathematics and language arts program. This

program has developed upon diagnostic efforts to have students clearly identify student learning objectives. Criterion-referenced objectives have proven especially helpful to provide both teachers and students with a "progressional road map" of the teaching learning situation.

Curriculum in both content areas has been planned on a sequenced set of learning tasks based on mastery of simple learning tasks by students as a foundation for further learning. Student success in this initial activity has proven a key to motivation for continued growth in mathematics and language-arts. Feedback and reinforcement at each level keys back to reinforcement by former task mastery and is based upon the recognition that all students will not learn at the same rate. Initial learning objectives require more time, as a rule, and as lower order prerequisite skills are mastered, students progress more rapidly. Consequently, less teaching time is usually necessary for higher order skill development.

Initially, each departmental team assesses students on specific concept mas-

tery. Objectives are sequenced to allow later concept information to develop upon prerequisite learnings. Three-week modular designs utilize criterion measurement of the comprehensive sequence of mastery skills for summative evaluation. Formative student feedback then provides the basis for effective mastery instruction.

Clinical supervision of teachers and comprehensive in-service education have both been necessary to implement this program. These components have provided feedback mechanisms necessary for students, teachers, and curriculum workers in the building. Classroom instruction developed in this setting has enhanced the effectiveness of the supervision process and a means to identify success in the program at each step.

#### Reference

Taylor, Gary L. "Mastery Learning: A Prescription for Success." *NASSP Bulletin* 67, 464 (September 1980): 84089.

## Curriculum Trends in English

CHARLES SUHOR

#### National Writing Project Booming, Seeks Continued Growth

The National Writing Project, in which skilled teachers help other teachers to improve writing instruction, has grown from a modest program in the San Francisco Bay Area to a network with 118 sites in 44 states and 5 foreign countries. Additionally, the NWP trained over 70,000 teachers in school-year inservice programs and campus summer institutes in 1981-82, according to Director James R. Gray. He adds

that NWP efforts have held up under evaluation: a collection of evaluation studies conducted at 15 sites between 1977 and 1982 shows a positive impact on the teaching of writing and on student writing performance.

The project does have some problems, Gray points out. "Some NWP sites are struggling to hang on because of continuing funding problems. The project has all of the typical problems that plague 'soft' money projects; it's always easier to find money to start a program

than to maintain it." Nevertheless, the National Endowment for the Humanities recently continued support for NWP through 1987, and a major fundraising campaign is underway to identify new funding sources—private, state, and federal. The project will expand its publications program, develop new

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evaluation designs, and extend its networking activities in the next five years, building on past successes and continued widespread concern about literacy skills. For further information write to James R. Gray, Director, National Writing Project, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

#### Few Changes in NAEP Reading and Writing Tests Under ETS

When the National Assessment of Educational Progress contract was awarded to Educational Testing Service after fourteen years under the auspices of the Education Commission of the States, some educators feared that the ETS approach might depart from the innovations introduced by NAEP. But Ina Mullis, an Associate Director of NAEP who has worked under both contracting agencies, reports that changes will be mainly non-substantive, in areas such as increased dissemination, specification of grade levels as well as age levels, and technical psychometric concerns such as scaling of results and BIB spiraling.

The 1983-84 writing assessment will include more writing tasks than in the past, Mullis says—15 exercises at each age/grade level. No "objective" writing exercises have been added to the test.

Reading assessment will be conducted every two years rather than every four, resulting in increased timeliness of information. Moreover, the number of background questions to students will be increased. Students will be asked about their reading and writing habits and their reading and writing instruction. Further, teachers and schools will be asked about their curricula, teaching materials, and instructional practices in reading and writing. For further information write to Ina Mullis, Associate Director, NAEP, Box 2923, Princeton, NJ 08541.

#### School Administrators Get Bad Rap in American Fiction

A study of 50 American novels written since 1950 and containing portrayals of school administrators reveals a predominance of negative images. According to Theresa Mac Smith's study (University of Nevada), a stereotype of the school administrator existed. The leadership styles of fictional school bureaucrats reflected a high concern for task and little concern for people. Administrators tended to use coercive power rather than persuasion. Public school administrators fared lowest of all, being depicted mainly in the task areas of pupil and staff personnel, while private school administrators and college administrators were sometimes seen in community and school leadership roles. Predictably, school administrators were rarely portrayed as heroes and there was a discrepancy between novelists' depictions and descriptions of school administrators in professional literature.

#### NSSE Explores Reading in a Complex Society

The 1984 Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (NSSE) will focus on *Becoming Readers in a Complex Society*. The volume is edited by Olive Niles, State Department of Education, Hartford, Connecticut; and Alan Purves, University of Illinois. Niles and Purves are past presidents, respectively, of the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English.

The Yearbook will include state-of-the-art chapters on theoretical, pedagogical, psychological, and sociological aspects of reading as well as commentaries on assessment and reading in relation to new technologies. Available in March of 1984, the volume will include writings by Deborah Appleman, Richard Beach, Jeanne Chall, Kathleen Chatz-

berg, Susan Conard, Roger Farr, Kenneth Goodman, Jerome Harste, Harold Herber, Joan Nelson Herber, Larry Mikulecky, David Pearson, Alan Purves, H. Alan Robinson, Charles Suhor, Robert Tierney, and Robert Wolfe.

#### English Must Be Taught as a Liberal Art, NCTE President Says

"Now that excellence in education is on everyone's mind, it's time to go back to teaching English as a liberal art," says Stephen Tchudi, president of the National Council for Teachers of English. The widespread belief that students must master grammar, spelling, and other mechanics of language before they can start reading and writing about literature is debasing the quality of U.S. education, according to Tchudi.

English was once identified with the humanities and liberal arts, notes Tchudi, a professor of English at Michigan State University. "But in the past decade, English teachers have been more and more pressured into treating it as a simple 'basic skill' to be learned through drill and memorization."

Excellence in the language arts depends on teachers having time to respond thoughtfully to each student's writing and to prepare for discussions of what is being read, Tchudi comments. Such individual encouragement, especially for the average student, diminishes as class size grows. And even before the present budget crises, he points out, most high school English teachers in the U.S. were trying to teach five classes a day totalling more than 150 students.

"English teachers nationwide are clearly concerned about excellence in education," Tchudi comments. "And they are willing to be held accountable for the quality of their work. However, they also need the support of the community and encouragement to teach as well as they can." □

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