

A Core Program Uses Evaluation

DOROTHY MUDD

Can evaluation be satisfying and creative? Dorothy Mudd, high school supervisor, Harford County, Maryland, answers this question from her own experience.

ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS we have been cautioned about our careless use of the term, "evaluation." If one's definition of the word limits it to the formal scientific measure of tangibles, then the censure is just. If one accepts the broad connotation of the word, including in it all aspects of valid and discriminating appraisal of growth and development through the medium of continuing informal measures, then our use of the term is justified.

Fortunately, participants in our program, pupils and teachers alike, have come to use the term with great freedom. We believe that one measure of our professional growth in the core program in which we are engaged is our concept that evaluation is an integral element in the organization of all learning experiences. We believe that it is good to take some of the fear and formality out of the business of measuring the growth and development of human beings. We take great comfort from the acceptance which we find children and adults bringing to their roles as appraisers of the progress they are making toward goals cooperatively determined.

Objective: Changed Behavior

We are frequently disturbed to observe educational programs premised on objectives pointed at changed behavior and then measured only in

terms of increased information. The correlation between factual knowledge and changed behavior is not particularly high and consequently we are looking for other measures of growth.

Children and teachers who participate in our program are generally conditioned to traditional testing routines. Pre-service educational experiences of teachers have, with few exceptions, provided extensive orientation to techniques of formal and informal testing for facts and information. In order to guide our program toward objectives other than accumulation of such facts and information, we have found it well to emphasize other evaluative measures. We are continuing to use standard achievement tests but teachers, pupils, and happily, in some instances, parents, are accepting them as one aspect of the total process of evaluation. This policy of placing less emphasis on the fact test has given the personnel in our program a sense of security in their attempt to adjust and adapt learning experiences to the needs, interests and abilities of our children.

We believe that administrators and supervisors fail in their announced role of improving and implementing instruction when they superimpose a testing program in such fashion that it becomes the total measure of the school's success in reaching its goals. In the past

several years we have tried, with reasonable success, to get the standard achievement test into proper focus in our program. We have not forgotten the motivation for our own teaching which stemmed from our fore-warning that the naked results of the tests of all children would be compared, and that our own prestige as teachers would be measured by the scores of our particular classes.

Teachers Observe Children

If we believe, as we say we do, that schools are concerned with the total growth and development of children, then opportunities for evaluation must be many and varied. The philosophy of our program, which expects the core teacher to assume the guidance role in the child's total school living, gives the teacher the privilege and the responsibility to observe behavior in all kinds of situations.

This continuing observation of children is our richest evaluative procedure. Teachers are learning as they follow children through the school day, in a program which considers all experiences as part of the curriculum, to observe and record behaviors in many settings. The curriculum record and the report to parents are two devices which are helping teachers develop sound techniques in this type of evaluation. We feel that the continued utilization of them is conducive to the growth and development of the teacher as well as the pupil.

Reviewing curriculum records this past June, I was again reassured of the value of this type of recording for the teacher. He has a reasonably objective analysis of his own progress, and that

analysis is of his own making. It may well be that teachers are given to reflective thinking and soul-searching anyway, but for us it has been useful to make some of this a matter of record!

Groups Evaluate

Group evaluation of the varied activities in which children engage in the school is an integral part of the core program. We see the generally higher standard of performance in such areas as assemblies, club activities, displays and exhibits, etc., as one observable outcome of this procedure. Children have accepted the practice of reviewing each experience in which they engage for the purpose of analyzing its success or failure in terms of their own planning and performance.

Trips and excursions, contributions of resource persons, committee reports, panel discussions, visual aids, and the myriad other opportunities inherent in rich classroom living are subject to group evaluation. In situations where teachers are adept in developing pupil leadership, the quality of this evaluation is high. I have participated in such sessions and observed the intelligent, sincere and objective manner in which junior high school children can appraise their progress. Of course, this facility in evaluating is the end product of pupil purposing, planning and developing of experiences. Valid self-evaluation cannot develop in a vacuum! Neither should children be asked to evaluate in terms of criteria which they have had no share in determining.

Long-Term Goals Are Stressed

Our core program is pointed at objectives, many of which are, by nature,



Madison (Wis.) Pub. Schools

Children review successes and failures in terms of their own planning and performance

long of realization. Educators must cultivate the virtue of patience. We cannot project a program toward life adjustment for children and measure its adequacy in a year or two. We recognize the hazard in an attitude of wishful waiting for adult performance by our present junior high school population, but some of the values we hold dear are remote from measurement. We believe that as we look and see, adapt and adjust, watch and work, we are finding some indications of growth toward our goals. While the following illustrations are not the product of paper and pencil tests, they are suggestive of what we consider important findings.

¶ Curriculum revision at the senior high school level is upon us. The base

of that program is being broadened to include more academic courses and more general and vocational offerings. This is the result of increased pupil retention. We are trying to revise the program to accommodate an increasingly heterogeneous high school population. We welcome this as one indication that the core program is helping to keep children in school. We think it is significant that we are feeling the need for enrichment in both the academic and the general areas of the senior high school.

¶ We are in the process of consolidation in our county and children are moving into new school units. The easy adjustment which they are making to what might have been very disturbing changes is, I believe, a direct result of

the kind of educational experiences they are having.

We used no yardstick for measuring, but somehow the day I had the privilege of participating in the move of four groups of children from four schools into their new junior-senior high school building seemed to me to offer an important opportunity to evaluate some aspects of our program. It is too long a story to tell here, but watching children say the Lord's Prayer and salute the flag with 300 of their fellows in one building, gather their effects and move by bus into a new environment with 1000 children from other schools and continue to be constructively occupied in an on-going program was indeed gratifying.

During the day I was free to observe pupil behavior in many kinds of situations. I recall seeing three seventh-grade boys who continued work on mats which they were weaving while various committees expedited the business of getting set up in the new home. When I walked into the room one of them said, "Look, I worked on mine on the bus too, and I never dropped a stitch!" Probably he stated the case for all of us. We capitalized on a situation and made what might have been an interruption to a program a wonderfully rich learning experience. Again, I don't know how one measures it, but I believe the easy adjustment which children and teachers are making to a new kind of school living stems from the security and stability they have in a sound educational program. That kind of security is one of the objectives toward which we are working.

Use is made of all opportunities that can be discovered to have parents par-

ticipate in the evaluation of our program. We cannot afford to miss their contributions. One teacher showed me a letter he received this spring from the father of a girl who had been in his eighth grade from September until March. The parents enrolled her reluctantly, as they protested the lack of attention to subject-matter departmentalization in his room. They were continually disturbed as they discovered such unorthodox procedures as nights without assigned homework, school time given to field trips and other visual aids, and reports with no indication of Mary's superiority over the other children. They were intelligent parents, however, and they came to school, talked with the teacher, observed the situation and accepted it gracefully.

In March they moved back to the community where Mary had been acknowledged as an "A" pupil in all the traditional school subjects. At the end of the first marking period there, the father wrote our Mr. X that despite his misgivings, Mary had had no trouble reassuming her academic leadership role. She had again made top grades, he reported enthusiastically. In a post-script he added that though he and his wife could not understand it, Mary was anxious to go to camp for the summer. She had been urged to do that for the past several years but had always protested, "We think she seems much more secure and independent than she ever was before, Mr. X, so maybe there is something to the kind of program you have." We believe that occasionally the most significant evaluations of our program stem from what may appear to be inconsequential observations.

Scientific Data Gathered

Some scientific data have been accumulated in our several schools. In progress is a follow-up study of students in senior high school and beyond. We have some comparative figures on achievement tests. All of these things we are doing in terms of individual school situations. This is the only course if we are to develop a program of education tuned to the needs of individuals. Our curriculum work is increasingly the product of efforts of local school personnel and consequently our

evaluation is pointed in the direction of local situations.

Those of us who teach, supervise and administer in public school programs have the responsibility of facilitating the development of those educational experiences which will best meet the needs, interests and abilities of the children whom we serve. Organizations and patterns of programs are means to that end. The core organization which is six years old in our junior high schools is, we believe, providing a sound, workable framework for us as we move in the direction of our goal.

Evaluation in the Oak Ridge Schools

R. H. OSTRANDER

A "continuing cooperative program of evaluation" has evolved in the public schools of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, under the leadership of Superintendent R. H. Ostrander.

EVALUATION of the total school program, as might be expected in a school system organized for cooperative action, has developed in the schools of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, as an outgrowth of their democratic organization.

This organization includes an administrative council composed of teachers elected from the eight elementary schools, one twelve-grade school and two secondary schools, and the administrative and supervisory personnel. It is this body, meeting monthly, that decides upon general policies, within, of course, the legal framework of the school organization. The members of the administrative staff, which includes all principals, also meet monthly to formulate administrative policies.

Further opportunities for participation by all the professional staff in evaluative activities are afforded in the workshop program conducted in August and June and on one Saturday morning a month throughout the school year. All regularly scheduled workshop sessions are held on time for which the staff receives remuneration. Two workshop groups are composed of both laymen and teachers. Their activities include a continuing program of evaluation.

Need for Evaluative Program

It was in the August 1948 workshop that the administrative staff undertook a searching examination of educational accomplishments. It was agreed that

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