

Programs and Practices

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Why Teachers Teach

The greatest motivating factors for teachers are working with students, helping students learn, teaching a special subject, a sense of mission, and a feeling of personal worth, according to a study done by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

There was no "burnout" problem with this group—some 30 working high school teachers, 20 former teachers, and 10 principals and superintendents from eight school districts near a large mid-western city. Those who had left teaching were concerned with personal problems and with questions of growth—personal and professional. Those who stayed in the profession either found teaching satisfying or developed interests outside the classroom to augment the rewards of teaching.

While the most powerful incentive for teachers was their own internal motivation, the researchers suggest that schools should relate rewards more closely to performance, including differentiated pay for different performance, plus a system that would enable teachers to experience upward mobility through a series of career stages reflecting higher status.

The alternative to these suggestions would be to create a school climate in which teachers may pursue excellence and receive the rewards they deserve, such as a good environment for teaching, leaves of absence when desirable, adequate supplies and facilities, and good support for teachers in working with students and the community.

The 122-page paper, *Commitment to Teaching: Teachers' Responses to Organizational Incentives* (Working Paper #323) is available for \$13 from the Center Document Service at 1025 W. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53706.

Prekindergarten Programs for Disadvantaged Are Successful

"Prekindergarten programs help children do a better job in school," concludes a five-year study conducted by the New York State Education Department. More than 5,000 children who were enrolled in the state's Experimental Prekindergarten Program were followed through completion of the third grade and compared with a control group of children who did not attend prekindergarten. The experimental program was set up to overcome the potential deficits in the backgrounds of disadvantaged children.

The study found that "children who attend prekindergarten have a definite academic advantage over children who do not attend, at least through third grade." On tests of general reasoning ability, school-related knowledge and skills, and knowledge of verbal concepts, the prekindergarteners were superior at the end of prekindergarten and demonstrated their advantage in general reasoning and verbal concepts throughout the primary grades.

A separate analysis showed that former prekindergarten children were less often held back or placed in special education classes than control group children during the five years of the study and they tended to make more normal progress through the grades. David J. Irvine, study coordinator, believes that the findings are significant because they suggest that "substantial savings in the cost of special education and remediation might be realized by expanding educational opportunities for preschool children."

Further information is available from David J. Irvine, Prekindergarten Study Coordinator, c/o New York State Education Department News, Albany, NY 12234.

PIPS Accentuates the Positive

The goal of the Pride in Public Schools campaign in the Hatboro-Horsham (Pennsylvania) School District is to switch emphasis to the positive side of educational programs. Community Relations Director Tom Russo believes, "There is so much general negativism that goes unchallenged relating to public education that it is not fair for all students, teachers, and schools to be indicted without question."

For information on the details of the PIPS program, contact Tom Russo, c/o Linda Walter, Editor, *Pennsylvania Education*, 333 Market St., P.O. Box 911, Harrisburg, PA 17108.

NCSS Initiates Peace Studies Project

Teachers at every grade level are hearing the concerns of students about the arms race and the threat of nuclear war. Because teachers need materials and ideas to cope with these concerns, the National Council for the Social Studies has begun collecting existing materials to make a preliminary assessment of their quality, range, and balance. Michael Ferber, former Yale University English professor, is coordinating this task.

Ferber would like to hear from teachers who (1) have experience teaching about war and peace, nuclear weaponry, and the like, (2) know of useful curriculum materials or groups now assembling them, and/or (3) can identify particular needs or problems in teaching in this area. Address all communications to Peace Project, Executive Director, NCSS, 3501 Neward St., N.W., Washington, DC 20016.

L.A. Enrollment Increases as Expected

Los Angeles Unified School District reported a gain of 6,386 pupils in kindergarten through 12th grade between the fall of 1981 and 1982. While this is only a one percent increase, it bears out predictions that the district's enrollment would increase slightly during the next few years.

Officials speculate that part of the increase came from the return of students who left when the district was under court order to integrate. Also, current economic conditions might have forced some parents to send their children to public schools rather than more costly private schools.

The increase was not experienced at every grade level. There was an increase at the junior high level, a slight increase in kindergarten, and an increase in the 1st through 3rd grades. Senior high enrollment, however, went down.

Spelling Through Video

A unique, multisensory approach to language arts is featured in "Spelling Plus," a videotape series using puppets, live actors, exciting field trips, visuals, and games to teach spelling, language arts, and more.

Each 20-minute lesson, in addition to its language arts content, contains a "plus" lesson in another subject area such as the arts, science, math, history, health, or safety. Presently the program is in use in the schools throughout Orange County, California, and seems to be well received by students and teachers alike. A survey revealed that all teachers and 80 percent of all students who have used the program would like all of their spelling lessons to be in this format. The spelling words used are taken from five major national word lists and are compatible with most existing spelling programs. "Spelling Plus" is available in VHS, Beta, and $\frac{3}{4}$ " formats.

For more information write Robert E. Donker, c/o Vi Owen, Editor, *California Curriculum News Report*, 340 Arthur Ave., Aptos, CA 95003.

Socioeconomic Status Is Important Factor in Reading Ability

Better readers at ages 9, 13, and 17 are students who do more homework, do not watch excessive amounts of television, and/or enjoy reading, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Other factors that appear to

improve reading skills are reading often in spare time and having a taste for fiction as well as non-fiction.

The NAEP study determined that superior reading abilities are found among females, whites, those attending school in advantaged-urban areas, and those with a parent having education beyond high school. The poorest readers were males, blacks, Hispanics, students from disadvantaged-urban areas, and those whose parents did not finish high school. Obviously, socioeconomic status is a factor in who has the best reading skills.

Enjoyment of reading dropped as students grew older, with four-fifths of the elementary students, half of the junior high school students, and a little over two-fifths of the senior high school students stating that they enjoy reading.

The report, *Reading Comprehension of American Youth*, #11-R-02, is available from the Education Commission of the States Distribution Center, 1860 Lincoln St., Denver, CO 80295, for \$5.90.

Education for Pluralism

FRANCIONE N. LEWIS
AND RAMÓN L. SANTIAGO

Sourcebook on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia

With the recent influx of Indochinese students into American classrooms,

many teachers have been searching for a curriculum guide that deals with the history, geography, arts, and religious and other customs of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In answer to their quest, the *Multicultural Education Sourcebook* provides learning activities designed to teach children of these ethnic groups about their own background and to enable other children to appreciate the cultures of Southeast Asia.

Developed by a group of teachers, librarians, museum staff, and curriculum specialists who participated in a

Boulder, Colorado, work effort called the Ethnic Studies Internship Project, the sourcebook describes learning activities that can be used for elementary and secondary students. It also includes ways to develop a multicultural curriculum based on Native American and other groups.

For more information or to order a copy of the sourcebook contact: Holly Lanville, Intern Project Director, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, P.O. Drawer P, Boulder, CO 80302. Phone: (303) 497-0200.

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