

Curriculum



Teachers work on updating the curriculum during the summer months when they are free of classroom responsibilities. Mrs. Lucille Burkhart and Richard Sumner worked on science units which were used by teachers last fall.

Past Improvements

Following is a summary of the major improvements made in instruction since 1961. They stem from recommendations of citizens and professional curriculum committees. They were made possible by funds voted by our citizens in November, 1961.

Staff and administrative reorganization to include:

1. Appointment of a Director of Elementary Education.
 2. Subject area coordinators, K-12, in mathematics, science, foreign language, art, music, physical education and special education.
 3. Departmental chairman in all secondary schools where size of staff justifies such supervision.
- Homogeneous grouping in certain academic areas including English, science, and mathematics as a result of the development of honors programs, regular college preparatory sections and certain sections for the noncollege-bound youth.
 - Honors and accelerated classes in science (biology, and chemistry, English (grades 10-12) American history and mathematics (grades 7-12).
 - Over 50% of the classrooms in the district equipped with room-darkening facilities for audio-visual instruction.
 - Speech added to the list of courses required for graduation from high school.
 - A minimum of three years of instruction possible in all foreign languages except Russian, French and Spanish; a six-year sequence; Latin, 4 years; German, 3 years and Russian, 2 years. Plans for an elementary program is under way with sixth grade instruction in French anticipated for September, 1964.
 - Foreign language instruction introduced in grade 7.
 - Language laboratories installed in all secondary schools to assist in the training of students to handle conversational skills.
 - The completion of a sequence in mathematics through introduction to calculus and analytic geometry.
 - Strengthening of laboratory experiences for all students taking science through a major investment in equipment under the National Defense Education Act.
 - A new science wing at Barnum with rooms designed for laboratory work in addition to classroom demonstration areas.
 - A new science program for the junior high school emphasizing the earth sciences in grades 7 and 8; an introduction to chemistry, physics and biology in grade 9. Biology has also been introduced in the ninth grade as an accelerated course for capable science students.
 - The Physical Science Study Committee physics course has become the basic college preparatory course at the high school level.
 - A new two-semester laboratory course in physical science for those high school students who may wish to get a minor in science with work in both chemistry and physics, but who do not wish to take a full year of each.
 - Introduction of an elective course in modern European history for the serious student of the social studies.
 - Introduction of a humanities course with emphasis on art, music, and literature at the senior high school level.
 - The development of an art appreciation course for senior high school students to strengthen further the humanities program.
 - A planned sequence of commercial subjects with new courses in basic business, record keeping, notehand (a simplified shorthand), and business mathematics.
 - New courses to broaden the scope of the home economics program, including Marriage and the Family, and Home Planning. A course in consumer economics, designed for the home maker, is being developed.
 - A change in emphasis in industrial education courses to provide greater depth in the study of wood and metal technology.
 - Introduction of units in physical fitness at all levels in all physical education courses.
 - The beginning of an intramural sports program for boys and girls.
 - Increased counseling service. Part-time counselors, with had teaching or extra duty assignments, have been eliminated.

- Substantial increase in the per-pupil expenditure for books and periodicals for both elementary and secondary schools.
- Major improvements in equipment and space for all elementary schools.
- The employment of six elementary librarians as a start to a greatly expanded program of service for young children.
- A new arithmetic program in the elementary grades.
- A major revision of the social studies sequence in grades K through six, including greater emphasis on geography as well as map and globe skills. Major expenditures for updating and enlarging elementary holdings of maps and globes.
- A completely revised kindergarten curriculum including reading and arithmetic experiences for those children who are ready to handle them.
- An inservice program that has brought over 25 college courses to Birmingham teachers.
- The introduction of a professional growth program to stimulate teachers to improve themselves on the job. This program is tied in with the salary schedule thus requiring continued professional growth as a condition of advancement on the salary scale.

Looking Ahead

During the years immediately ahead, those responsible for the program development in the district must assess the school's position relative to recent trends in curriculum change, new methods of instruction, and innovations in classroom and general school organization.

Furthermore, the implementation of a number of the recommendations from the Citizens' Study of Elementary Curriculum must demand the attention of the Board of Education and the school staff.

A glance at the list of improvements made during the past three years will show that the majority of changes that have been made have affected secondary education. With the completion of the Citizens' Elementary Report, similar attention must be focused on elementary education.

A few areas where improvement is needed are listed below:

1. The extension of team-teaching, particularly at the elementary level.
2. Programs for academically able students in the elementary schools.
3. Improvement in almost all curricula, particularly social studies, mathematics and the language arts. Equally important is the need to review the junior high school program, with serious thought to strengthening music, industrial arts, home economics and art curricula.
4. Only small inroads in the district have been made in the broad area of programmed instruction. The most significant has been the use of electronic equipment in teaching oral-audio skills in Foreign Language. Devices, in book, electronic and mechanical forms, are now fairly well developed that permit students to learn routine work, independently, at their own rate. The result is the freeing of the classroom teacher to work with students who need special help.
5. Personnel trained in educational research and development should be added to the central office staff to assist in evaluating existing programs and to help plan for the future.
6. More teachers, currently on a 10-month schedule, should be employed during the summer to plan in the areas of curriculum, instructional methods and classroom organization. The start in this direction made within the district during the past three years clearly demonstrates that this procedure is more productive than attempting to effect program change as an end-of-the-day activity when the energies of the staff are depleted.
7. The district has grown to the point where all pupil services need to be placed within one department. They include the services of such personnel as visiting teachers, school nurses, speech correctorists, reading specialists, psychological services, as well as guidance and child accounting personnel.