

1957

# An evaluation of the third grade social studies curriculum in Quincy, Massachusetts

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Thesis

AN EVALUATION OF THE THIRD  
GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN  
QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS

Submitted by

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

#### Statement of the Problem

The problem of this thesis is to evaluate the third grade Social Studies curriculum in Quincy, Massachusetts, and to identify areas for improvement or increased emphasis. Data gathered will form a basis for revision of the existing course of study.

#### Justification of the Problems

Last May a questionnaire was sent to all the third grade teachers in Quincy, Massachusetts requesting information concerning the following three curriculum problems:

1. What curriculum areas should merit attention in an in-service program.
2. What subject fields should be covered.
3. What curricular guides were in greatest need of revision.

From the results of these questionnaires, it was determined that the teachers wanted more help and revision in the social studies and science areas. Since revision should be based on an evaluation, a questionnaire was devised to record teachers opinions and to collect information concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the present course of study.

### Scope of the Study

This study is based on the results of a survey of thirty-six third grade teachers in twenty-three elementary schools in Quincy, Massachusetts. These third grade teachers were requested to answer questions ranging from "Does the curriculum provide for critical thinking and problem solving?" to "What topics would you like added or omitted?" Results and comments have been analyzed to determine first what is pertinent in the present guide and secondly what changes, additions and deletions, should be incorporated in a new guide.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RESEARCH

The origin of modern evaluation goes back many decades. In the United States the concept of evaluation as related to measurement extends from J. M. Rice about 1900 to the present day program. Monroe <sup>1.</sup> has distinguished between measurement and evaluation by indicating that the emphasis in measurement is upon single aspects of subject matter achievement or specific skills and abilities. The emphasis in evaluation is upon broad personality changes and major objectives of an educational program. Evaluation involves the identification and formulation of a comprehensive range of major objectives of a curriculum, their definition in terms of pupil behavior to be realized, and the selection or construction of valid, reliable and practical instruments for appraising major objectives of the curriculum.

Beginning with 1930, the measurement and evaluation movement expanded and matured. It was during this period also that studies evaluating newer practices in elementary and secondary schools were carried on by Tyler, Wrightstone,

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1. Monroe, W. S. "Educational Measurement in 1920 and in 1945. Journal of Educational Research" 38:334-340; January 1945.

and others. At this time evaluative criteria were set up for accrediting high schools and colleges. Trends in evaluation in recent decades have evolved from a newer philosophy of education and the development of newer techniques for assessing growth and development. Modern concepts in evaluation requires, formulation of a comprehensive range of curriculum objectives which includes not only acquisition of academic information and skills, but also interests, attitudes, appreciations, critical thinking, and personal and social adaptability.

Meaning of Evaluation

Despite the frequency with which it is used, or perhaps because of its popularity, the word "evaluation" has failed to acquire a clear cut single meaning among many members of the teaching profession. The following are a few of the variations:

1. Evaluation as the application of value to a problem.
2. Evaluation as a synonym for measurement. Many school systems will refer to the use of standardized tests as their evaluation program.
3. Evaluation as a label for processes used in gauging teaching competence. The process of judging the teachers work is often referred to as evaluation. This is perhaps done because of the objections to



the word "rating". The narrowing of evaluation to one specific activity such as teacher rating is unfortunate.

- 4. Evaluation as the appraisal of curriculum practices and educational resources.
- 5. Evaluation as concerned with the study of the status of, or changes in, children's behavior.

Evaluation Defined

In order to properly understand evaluation one must first decide on the meaning of it. Smith and Tyler define it thus:

".....implies a process by which the values of an enterprise are ascertained." 2.

Alexander and Saylor note that

".....A more adequate concept of evaluation includes all the activities whereby an individual or group determines how well agreed-on purposes have been achieved." 3.

Quillen and Hanna broaden the two preceding statements when they speak of evaluation as

".....the process of gathering and interpreting evidence on changes in the behavior of students as

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2. Smith, E. R. and Tyler, R. W. Appraising & Recording Student Progress. New York, Harper and Bros. 1942, p. 5.

3. Alexander, W. M. and Saylor, J. G., Secondary Education New York, Rinehart, 1950 p. 442.

they progress through school." 4.

Writing at greater length, Burr, Harding and Jacobs prepared the following:

".....The process of determining the extent to which values are achieved, purposes carried out, and goals reached is evaluation. The term is derived from the word "value" since the appraisal of the effectiveness of educative experience should be based upon a consistent, sound, analysis of the purposes themselves and consideration of the techniques by which goal are attained, as well as the degree of achievement. To say it in other words, one asks: Is this good? Are we working at it in an intelligent manner? Are we getting the job done? 5.

Wrightstone, a pioneer and authority in appraisal practices, writes:

".....Evaluation is a relatively new technical term, introduced to designate a more comprehensive concept of measurement than is implied in conventional tests and examinations. Distinction may be made between measurement and evaluation by indicating that the emphasis in measurement is upon single aspects of subject matter achievement or specific skill and abilities, but that the emphasis in evaluation is upon broad personality changes and major objectives of an educational program. These include not only subject matter achievement, but also attitudes, interests, ideals, way of thinking, work habits, and personal and social adaptability." 6.

The evaluation concept has been stimulated by the

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4. Quillen, I. James and Hanna, Lavone A. Education for Social Competence. Chicago, Scott, Foresman and Co., 1948, p. 343.

5. Burr, James B., Harding, Lowry W., and Jacobs, Leland B., Student Teaching in the Elementary School., N.Y. Appleton Century-Crofts, 1950, p. 183.

6. Wrightstone, J. Wayne, Evaluation. Encyclopedia of Educational Research, N. Y. The MacMillan Co. 1950, P.403

attention of educators to the whole child and his behavior. It is through the application of the evaluation concept rather than of the narrower concepts of measurement and testing that this result is most effectively obtained. We evaluate to find out not what the pupils have learned, but how this learning has affected them.

Evaluation in the social studies is the process of determining the kind and extent of changes in the behavior of children that result from experience designed to promote social learning.

"Evaluation consists of all the things that the teacher, the children, the principal, and other school workers do to appraise the outcomes of the program." 7.

Procedures for Evaluation

Evaluation of the social studies should be carried on as continuously and persistently as evaluation of the child's learning. Evaluation of the social studies program must be continuous, cooperative, comprehensive, and systematic. Michaelis has stated in his book that from working with various groups on evaluation, no single procedure or order is best for all situations. There are however a few general guidelines that he sets up which are helpful in evaluating a

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7. Michaelis, John U. Social Studies for Children in a Democracy. Prentice Hall, Inc., N. Y. 1950, p. 374.

social studies program. First the group or individual should start with problems that are of greatest concern. These problems should be explored carefully so that relationships to other problems are clearly discerned. Cooperative study, discussion, and sharing of ideas is essential. A sincere attempt should be made to detect weaknesses and problem areas as early as possible. The teacher should play a major role in evaluation of the program, since such a procedure brings much in-service growth. The prime question that should guide an appraisal of the program is "What changes can be made that will promote the learning of the child?"

#### Techniques of Evaluation

There are many other techniques of evaluation available to teachers. The following are a few ideas from various people on evaluation. It should be carried on as a cooperative process with cooperative points of views. It must be done in cooperation with other teachers, the children, parents, supervisors and administrations. All have a stake in the program. The teacher and the children share in the clarification of purpose and in the evaluation. Group evaluation is based on group made standards and goals. Parents should become involved in the discussion of goals, the clarification of goals in terms of the hopes they have for their children, and the interpretation of information received through the use of evaluative instruments. Super-

visors and administrators should assist in planning and developing a more effective program and in interpreting and using evaluative evidence. Unless a program is cooperatively operated, it will not yield maximum returns.

Evaluation must be done in terms of the purposes of the program. The central function of evaluation is to determine the extent to which established goals are achieved. Goals must be clearly defined. The following are a few devices or procedures that could be used.

Group Discussion

Group Interview

Individual Interview

Checklists

Rating Scales

Inventories

Questionnaires

Charts

The selection of evaluative devices depends on the goal being evaluated.

Evaluative evidence must be organized and summarized in a manner that facilitates interpretation. Considerable care needs to be given to interpretation of evidence gathered through evaluation. Thus the form, depending on the purpose of evaluation is important.

Ole Sand, editor of the Twenty-Sixth Year-book of the

National Council for the Social Studies has this to say about building a curriculum.

"The frontiers in our present world are largely in the realm of the social sciences. The great contributions of the future lie in extending man's understanding of himself and his physical and social world, and in equipping him to think, feel, and act wisely in achieving the "good" life, and the "good" society. Improving the social studies curriculum to meet this challenge becomes a practical problem requiring a different order of attention than it has received in the past." 8.

He then lists what he thinks are the ten important tasks which should be followed in building a curriculum. The following are a list of these ten tasks:

1. Study children and youth.
2. Study society and problems which endanger international relations and interpersonal relations.
3. Study what others have done.
4. Formulate and use a philosophy.
5. Develop a defensible theory of learning.
6. Formulate clear objectives which indicate both behavior and content.
7. Develop creative learning experiences.
8. Select instructional materials.
9. Organize learning experiences to provide

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8. Sand, Cle and Ellsworth, Ruth. Improving the Social Studies Curriculum. Wisconsin, Menasha, Banta Publishing Co. 1955, P. 237.

for continuity, sequence, and intergration.

- 10. Evaluate the extent to which each individual attains the objectives, with particular emphasis on behavioral change.

Cooperative curriculum planning has two interrelated facets which must be considered:

- (a) an understanding of these tasks to be done.
- (b) skills in working together to accomplish them.

The social studies curriculum may be improved by beginning at any point, and going in any order as long as all ten aspects are eventually studied and revised.



## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES

#### Inquiry Form

In order to carry out an evaluation of the course of study now in use, a checklist was devised to be sent to the teachers in Quincy to gather data, in an organized manner, regarding their opinions. This inquiry was a composite of two questionnaires. The design of the checklist was taken from that of John U. Michaelis' Evaluation of the Social Studies Program found in Chapter Sixteen of his book.<sup>1</sup> The questions are a composite of this check-list and a check-list made up by a group of graduate students at Boston University, called "The Score-Board for Evaluation of the Social Studies Program." The questions ranged from "Does the curriculum provide for critical thinking and problem solving?" to "What topics would you like added or omitted?" The questions could be answered in three different ways - yes, ? no. "Yes" signified adequacy in every respect. "No" indicated that little or no attention had been given to that item, and that immediate action was needed. A check under "?" indicated that the matter needed further study or that

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1. Michaelis, John U., Social Studies for Children in a Democracy. New York: Prentice - Hall, Inc., 1950, pp. 405 - 414.



the present status was not clear.

#### Administration of the Inquiry

The inquiry because of the teachers importance in evaluation was sent to all the third grade teachers in the twenty-three elementary schools in Quincy, Mass. Their point of view, methods of teaching, knowledge of children's growth, selection of materials, and ability to make intelligent judgements gives them a key position in evaluation. Thirty-three of these inquiries were sent out and thirty-one of them were returned. These were distributed by means of the principals and returned to the writer by means of including a self-addressed, stamped envelope with each inquiry.

#### Treatment and Summarization

When all the blanks were returned, they were tabulated on a chart which you will find in chapter four of this thesis. Questions 24, 25 and 26 were tabulated separately since they dealt with what topics the teachers would like added, what ones they would like omitted, and what suggestions not mentioned in the questionnaire they would like to make. Each question that was answered by fifty percent or more of the teachers in the negative will be discussed in the light of research and suggestions given to make that specific area of the curriculum more adequate when revision takes place. Questions that were checked by fifty percent or more of the teachers with a "?" shall be treated and discussed so that

further emphasis may be given these areas. If a number of teachers mention covering certain topics that are not already covered in the present curriculum, suggestions for doing so will be given plus the reasons found in research either for or against including these topics in the third grade. This same procedure will be used for summarizing the topics teachers would like omitted.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Analysis Procedure

The following chapter deals with responses to the questionnaires. The questionnaire was sent to the thirty, third grade teachers in the twenty-three elementary schools in Quincy, Massachusetts. Of the thirty-three questionnaires sent out thirty or ninety-one percent were returned. Most of the items were answered by all of the teachers, but a few of the items were left blank as will be observed in the table.

From the inquiry were established certain strengths, and weaknesses in the present curriculum. These will be discussed later and suggestions for revision will follow. On the table following are the data indicating the number of responses and the percent of teachers responding Yes, ? No, on each of the items.

Inquiry Items	Total Number	Percent		
		Yes	?	No
1. Does the curriculum identify social attitudes and ideals to be developed in pupils?	27	67	7	17
2. Does the curriculum identify appreciations concerning society or our culture which should be acquired by pupil?	30	80	3	17
3. Does the curriculum identify concepts, understandings and functional information to be acquired by pupils?	30	77	13	10
4. Does the curriculum provide for critical thinking about social problems?	30	40	30	30
6. Do the units provide a sequence or continuity in the program throughout the entire grade capitalizing on the interests and needs of the child?	30	67	23	10
7. Does the curriculum provide opportunity to develop new interests or make use of interests already developed?	30	60	23	17
8. Is the program related to the common or basic needs (food, clothing and shelter) of children?	30	90	3	7
9. Does the curriculum provide opportunities to adapt content to the different interests and capabilities of children and backgrounds?	29	60	20	17
10. Is it recognized that multiple learnings grow out of each experience?	30	73	23	3
11. Does the curriculum give suggestions for stimulating a good classroom environment?	30	70	13	17
12. Does the curriculum clearly state the purpose of each unit or topic				

Inquiry Items	Total Number	Percent		
		Yes	?	No
of instruction?	30	70	10	20
13. Does the curriculum have problems and needs in the unit clearly childlike and interesting?	30	33	13	53
14. Does the curriculum list a variety of materials which enrich the instruction in each major topic?	30	67	17	17
15. Are plans or suggestions made for evaluating pupil growth and achievement throughout the unit?	30	10	17	73
16. Does the curriculum list available resources and bibliography?	30	47	17	37
17. Are the units revised and kept up to date?	30	13	23	63
18. Has the community been studied to determine available resources?	28	17	43	33
20. Does the curriculum list varied audiovisual aids?	30	17	17	67
21. Are these aids available?	23	27	33	17
22. Does the curriculum list varied types of reading materials and are they available?	30	30	17	53
23. Does the curriculum define the relationships between the social studies and the reading program?	30	13	33	53

### Analysis of Responses to Questionnaire

From the responses made by the teachers the present curriculum has many strengths which should be incorporated in the new curriculum.

1. The program is related to the study of common or basic needs of the children; namely food, clothing and shelter.
2. It identifies appreciations concerning society which should be acquired by pupils.
3. It identifies concepts, understandings and functional information to be acquired.
4. The curriculum guide states the purpose of each unit or topic of instruction.
5. The curriculum guide gives suggestions for stimulating a good classroom environment.
6. It recognizes that multiple learnings grow out of each experience.
7. The units covered provide a sequence in the program throughout the entire grade, capitalizing on the interests and needs of the children.
8. It identifies social attitudes and ideals to be developed in pupils.

By the term significant weaknesses is meant those items checked by fifty percent or more of the teachers in the negative. The following is a list of the weaknesses in

the present curriculum.

1. The curriculum does not have problems and needs in the unit clearly childlike and interesting.
2. Plans or suggestions are not made throughout the unit for evaluating pupil growth and achievement.
3. The units are not revised and kept up to date.
4. The curriculum does not list audiovisual aids.
5. It does not list varied types of reading material and the availability of such material.
6. It does not define the relationship between the social studies and the reading program.

#### Suggestions for Revision

In light of the recognized weaknesses, the new course of study should make provisions such as the following:

1. To have problems and needs in the unit listed.

This could be accomplished by giving suggestions for initiating units and stirring up interest from the class. The teacher could chose from such a list of suggestions what would be best for her class. This could be accomplished in a unit on clothing by the following.

- a. Display of wool, cotton and silk.
- b. Pictures of the processes for making materials.
- c. Signs with questions, "How is silk made?"

d. Have class collect pictures of the different styles of clothing.

e. How does weather influence clothing?

2. Plans or suggestions for evaluating the unit.

Evaluation of pupil growth can be done in many ways. The most common technique is the evaluation made by the teachers observation. She can check for example on how they form groups, meet new problems, locate and find new sources of information. A checklist incorporated in the unit for the teachers to go by would be helpful. They could check such items as the following either Yes, Improved or No.

Does the child accept suggestions and help?

Does the child make constructive suggestions?

Does he stick to the group plans?

Does he work courteously with others?

Suggestions for pupils checklist could be given so that they could evaluate themselves.

3. A Plan for revising the units and keeping them up to date could be given. The organization of any program should be flexible and subject to revision. In chapter two of this thesis some means of evaluating and revision have been given. One



of the easiest ways is to include a questionnaire with each thesis that the teachers could fill out and send to the social studies committee at the end of each year. If the curriculum was in a loose leaf type of notebook a new unit or a revised unit could be added without redoing the whole curriculum.

4. Suggestions for visual aids could be obtained from the following sources.
  - a. The visual aids department in the school system.
  - b. The film and film strip companies.
  - c. The library.
  - d. Many of the large companies.

From these sources a list pertaining to the specific unit being covered could be compiled and included in each unit.

5. Suggestions for the types of reading material and what is available could be obtained from
  - a. The libraries.
  - b. The books in the school system.
  - c. The book stores.
  - d. The book companies.
  - e. Studies made by various people in the reading field.

This material obtained from these sources could then be compiled under the proper unit headings. Several types of reading material should be used in the social studies programs. Booklets, bulletins, pamphlets, folders, texts, encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, stories, poem, work books and anthologies are a few of the reference type of materials that should be available for every class.

6. In order to define the relationship between the social studies and the reading program a brief paragraph could be included with the bibliography for teachers or in the beginning of the curriculum when the overview of the units is discussed. This paragraph should point out that children, in the social studies program read for various purposes.
  - a. To find information.
  - b. To get ideas for plays, murals, craftwork.
  - c. To answer questions.
  - d. To make outlines.
  - e. To solve problems.
  - f. To increase background.
  - g. To solve any needs that might arise.Reading materials should not determine the

program but should be used to enrich it. Consideration should be given to the reading abilities and study skills needed for various purposes. The children should be taught skimming, getting details, following direction, summarizing and outlining.

The items that could not be analyzed in the form above are what subjects teachers would like added and omitted and suggestions.

Suggestions given by teachers for revision.

Revisal of the Indian Unit (understandings).

Units should give specific information and directions. Teach Indians in September and October followed by "Ways of Our Land". This is a good beginning for "Our Big World" (same series) used in the fourth grade.

Social Studies outline is far too lengthy, would like three units a year.

Would like additional references for reading materials.

Would like a text book, as there is not enough material available on a third grade level.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate and identify areas for improvement or increased emphasis in the third grade Social Studies curriculum in Quincy, Massachusetts. It was also the purpose to identify strengths and weaknesses in the present curriculum. The information gathered will form a basis for revising the existing course of study. The

#### Procedure Used

From reviewing the research, it was evident that no one specific method of revision is better than any other. There are many and varied ways of evaluating and revising a social studies curriculum. It is only by studying your teachers, schools, children, and community that a method may be decided upon.

The method used in this thesis for evaluating was the checklist method of gathering teachers opinions. A questionnaire was devised to be sent to all the third grade teachers (thirty-three) in the twenty-three elementary schools in Quincy, Massachusetts. This was a composite of a questionnaire made up by a group of seminar students at Boston University, and one made up by Michalis which is

found in Chapter 16 of his book, The Teaching of Social Studies in a Democracy. The questionnaire was sent and returned by thirty of the teachers. The results of this questionnaire were then tabulated and discussed.

### Conclusions

From the results of research, it was found that no one method can be used to evaluate a curriculum. The survey--questionnaire method used in this thesis, showed that the curriculum now in use has many strengths which should be incorporated in the new curriculum. The following is a summarization of these strengths.

1. The program is related to common needs of children.
2. It identifies concepts, understandings, appreciations and functional information which should be acquired.
3. The guide states the purpose of each unit and gives suggestions for stimulating a good classroom environment.
4. It recognizes that multiple learnings grow out of each experience and identifies social attitudes and ideals to be developed in pupils.

The survey also pointed out that the curriculum now in use had six weaknesses.

1. The curriculum does not have problems in the unit

clearly childlike and interesting.

2. Plans or suggestions are not made throughout the unit for evaluating pupil growth and achievement.
3. The units are not revised and kept up to date.
4. The curriculum does not list audiovisual aids or various types of reading materials.

The curriculum now in use is certainly in need of revision. Suggestions for this revision from the results of research would be to have a group of teachers meet once a week or every other week to discuss the new curriculum. A consultant should be invited to attend and guide this group. New ideas could be obtained also by studying the current guides being used in various communities. After the guide is set up and used for a year, it would be well to send out another questionnaire so that all teachers might evaluate and express their opinions of the new curriculum.

The guide now in use in the third grade in Quincy, Massachusetts, has many good points and some weak points which need strengthening. It is only through constant evaluation and revision that all guides can be kept up to date. The committee on revision would do well to study the suggestions for revision given in Chapter IV of this thesis by the third grade teachers and decide what should be omitted and added.

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