

WHAT SHOULD BE THE CURRICULUM?

Dr. Paul Eggen
Professor, College of Education
University of North Florida

The core of any school system, whether it be in Florida or any other state or nation, is its curriculum. Curriculum decisions are extremely difficult, affected by a bewilderingly complex array of influences ranging from conflicting philosophies to societal and cultural trends to advances in the understanding of how people learn. Given that these factors are present, a brief discussion of curriculum in Florida's schools will necessarily delimit the scope of the treatment and certain assumptions and philosophical orientations will be implicit in the presentation. However, this paper is designed to provide some direction and a means for further dialogue. It necessarily must then contain some concrete suggestions for curriculum decisions in the State of Florida.

Curriculum Defined

We begin with definition. Though variously defined, the term curriculum typically embraces those activities occurring in schools which educate students. Such a definition permits the inclusion not only of tenth grade biology and third grade arithmetic but also of high school football and the fifth grade spring pageant. Further, it includes such educative activities as recess in the elementary grades, passing periods in the high schools. Of these differing activities, however, some are obviously more controlled and more controllable than others: it is easier for teachers to plan and implement the teaching and learning that are to occur in the eighth grade civics classes they teach