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## THE SOCIAL INFORMATION NEEDS OF GRADE-NINE BOYS: ARE THEY BEING MET?

### THE PROBLEM

Many teachers, guidance workers, and counsellors have stressed the need for adopting a curriculum more suited to the needs of students. This particularly applies to a guidance curriculum. However, many present-day guidance curricula have evolved through the trial-and-error methods of local school districts, and even the resulting province-wide curricula have not adequately met students' needs. What are the expressed social information needs of students? To answer this question the following study was undertaken.

The objectives of this investigation were twofold. First, an attempt was made to evaluate the effectiveness of the present Manitoba Guidance Curriculum in the area of social information. Secondly, an attempt was made to survey further needs of grade-nine boys which were not mentioned in the curriculum in the area of social information.

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What areas of social information in the present Manitoba Guidance Curriculum are of most interest to grade-nine boys?
2. What areas on the curriculum are of least interest?
3. What areas of interest are particularly well covered by the curriculum?
4. What areas are most inadequately covered by the curriculum?

The present writer assumed that social guidance is a necessary part of the total education program. It was further assumed that the 128 grade-nine boys at Garden City Collegiate (a high school with approximately 1,100 students in a suburb of Winnipeg) were a typical group.

### THE METHOD

The question of the social information needs of grade-nine boys was investigated by means of the normative-survey method of research. Following a careful perusal of the present Manitoba Guidance Curriculum, utilizing problems dealing with social problems of adolescents from the Mooney Problem Checklist, and following suggestions from various sources dealing with social information (Ball, 1950; Laney, 1966; Moore, 1965), the present writer developed a questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire was an outline of the present Manitoba Guidance Curriculum in the area of social information, and the grade-nine boys were asked to indicate their preferences for the seven sections:

1. Boy-girl relations
2. Greater tolerance for others
3. Ethnic and religious groups
4. Family living
5. Juvenile delinquency

## 6. Citizenship

## 7. Leisure time

Secondly, the subjects were asked to check any problems that they had from a list of 90 typical social problems of adolescents. The third part of the questionnaire was unstructured, and students were asked to indicate areas they felt were not covered in the first two parts of the survey.

This questionnaire was first completed by 128 boys in grade nine in September, 1966. To check whether this group would give similar responses after guidance classes dealing with social information, the same questionnaire was given to the same group in May, 1967. Only slight differences were found; consequently, only the results of the copies of the questionnaire completed in September were tabulated.

## THE FINDINGS

The students' responses to the first part of the questionnaire clearly indicated that the most popular topic was boy-girl relations. Approximately two-thirds of the boys chose this area as their first choice. Where the student chose boy-girl relations as his first choice, he frequently chose juvenile delinquency and leisure time as either his second or third choice. These two topics, therefore, proved to be next in popularity or importance to the grade-nine boys. The results further indicated that the areas on ethnic and religious groups and citizenship were most frequently chosen as last choices. Other areas, family living, and greater tolerance for others, were frequently chosen as middle choices; that is, third to fifth choice.

TABLE 1  
RANKS GIVEN TO EACH AREA BY GRADE-9 BOYS

Areas	Rank (N=128)						
	1st.	2nd.	3rd.	4th.	5th.	6th.	7th.
Boy-Girl Relations .....	80*	12	17	2	4	8	5
Greater Tolerance for Others .....	4	12	21	40	26	20	5
Ethnic and Religious Groups .....	8	4	8	9	31	13	55
Family Living .....	8	13	28	18	25	22	14
Juvenile Delinquency .....	8	48	13	26	11	18	4
Citizenship .....	2	9	22	13	23	31	28
Leisure Time .....	18	30	19	20	8	16	17

\*Figures show the number of students indicating specific rank.

In the second part of the survey, students were asked to indicate the social problems they occasionally had. The results of this section are illustrated on Table 2. The most frequently checked problems suggested once again the need for a proper section on boy-girl relations, further emphasis on the section on family living and greater tolerance for others, as well as a need for a section on financial planning.

TABLE 2  
REPORTED SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF GRADE-9 BOYS

Problem	N=128	
	Frequency of Occurrence	
1. Family quarrels .....	82*	
2. Being criticized by parents .....	76	
3. Getting into arguments .....	58	
4. Wanting things my parents won't give me .....	58	
5. More information about sex matters .....	52	
6. Parents not liking my friends .....	48	
7. Dating .....	42	
8. Wanting to know more about girls .....	40	
9. Getting into fights .....	36	
10. Losing my temper .....	34	
11. Learning how to dance .....	28	
12. Nothing interesting to do in my spare time .....	28	
13. Not allowed to use the family car .....	24	
14. Thinking too much about the opposite sex .....	22	
15. Not allowed to go out at night .....	20	
16. Wishing people liked me better .....	20	
17. Parents making too many decisions for me .....	20	
18. Slow in making friends .....	18	
19. Awkward in meeting people .....	15	
20. Clash of opinion between me and my parents .....	14	
21. Too little time for play and fun .....	13	
22. Too little chance to go to parties .....	10	
23. No one to tell my troubles to .....	10	
24. Parents old-fashioned in their ideas .....	9	
25. Wanting a more pleasing personality .....	6	
26. Too easily led by other people .....	5	
27. Deciding whether to go steady .....	5	

\*Figures show the number of students indicating a particular problem.

In the third part of the questionnaire, students were given instructions to write about any areas of social information about which they would like more information and which had not been mentioned in the first two sections of the questionnaire. From the sample of 128 boys, 78 responded to this section. Of the 78 responses received, about one half of the students indicated money problems. The 78 responses received could be classified roughly as follows:

1. Money problems .....	37
2. Personal problems .....	18
3. Boy-girl relations .....	10
4. Educational problems .....	7
5. Vocational problems .....	6

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the questionnaire suggested the following conclusions:

1. Adolescents indicated a need to know about financial planning or consumer education. The Manitoba Guidance Curriculum failed to include any topics dealing with this area.

2. The boys in grade nine chose the area on boy-girl relations first, yet the Manitoba Guidance Curriculum lacks a well-defined program in this area.
3. On the present curriculum, the grade-nine boys found the following topics of least interest: ethnic and religious groups, greater tolerance for others, and citizenship.
4. On the present Manitoba Guidance Curriculum (1966), the subjects indicated the following as topics on which they most wanted information: boy-girl relations, juvenile delinquency, and leisure-time activities.

Based on the results of the research done, the following recommendations seem justified:

1. The Manitoba Guidance Curriculum should be revised to include a section on consumer education. This area should include outlines on topics such as the following: budgeting, credit buying, shopping, advertising, pensions and retirement, insurance, and workmen's compensation.
2. The Manitoba Guidance Curriculum needs a clearly defined section on boy-girl relations. This area would include topics such as: sex information, dating, courtship, marriage, love, popularity and "going steady".

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