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CHEM STUDY IN IOWA SCHOOLS

—A Panel Discussion

One of the largest turnouts for a sectional meeting in several years showed a great deal of interest in the discussion of the Chem Study program in Iowa. Dr. Joe Danforth, Grinnell College, provided the initial spark by discussing the view of his department. He suggested that while statistics are not available to show that Chem Study students do better in college freshmen chemistry than traditional students, present indications are that colleges are moving toward Chem Study or its equivalent. He favored the program and suggested that it provided a very strong background in theory and in the development of modern scientific thought. He recommended the program for all high school students, terminal or college bound. He emphasized that Chem Study is considered by the NSF to be an established curricular offering and is one of the more secure programs of instruction at the present time.

Mr. Paul Tweeten, Science Consultant for the State Department of Public Instruction, gave an interesting discussion of the involvement of Iowa Schools in the program. He suggested that 10% of the students enrolled in Chemistry are now taking Chem Study. Present statistics substantiate a shift toward Chem Study. There are no indications that any of the schools that have adopted it have abandoned it. Mr. Tweeten compared our offering in the state to Wisconsin's. He finds that 20% of Wisconsin students are in Chems.

Mr. Carl Gochnauer, science instructor, Lake Park Community School district compared the Chems and CBA offerings. He brought out the fact that Chems is considered to be somewhat less rigorous and therefore perhaps more appropriate for high school students. The conclusion was that both are concerned with an experimental base for learning and they both deserve attention. He suggested that reasons for reticence on the part of teachers might be related to: a) an already sufficient exposure to "New" programs, b) lack of background on the part of the instructors, c) ignorance on the part of the instructor of the program's possibilities, d) lack of time to prepare for the laboratory oriented course in the smaller high school, e) a feeling that the students cannot handle the materials in Chem Study.

Mr. James Leith, Science Director, Spencer Community Schools, dealt with reasons for giving careful consideration before adoption of Chems:

- a) An adoption of Chems may represent a move away from an integrated or unified approach to teaching of science. Perhaps science is already dissected too much and instructors may well be doing more of this by emphasizing a course such as Chems which may be considered to be strictly Chemistry.
- b) Instructors may be concerned about the fact that we are boring the student with year after year concern for the methods of science. Perhaps we are not giving them enough content. The black box may be seen so many times that it loses whatever value it may have for students.
- c) The program in the school must be enriched and strengthened at a lower level before the "beefed up" courses are adopted at the higher level. It will come as quite a shock to a student who has been in descriptive courses for most of his academic career

to be immersed in a course such as Chem Study without prior sensitivity.

- d) Chem Study may not serve the purposes of the student who is to become a technician. We may not be providing this student with the tools they need. Perhaps traditional chemistry does this more adequately without injuring the potential scientist.
- e) Traditional Chemistry has fulfilled the needs of students in the past. There is no firm evidence that it is not doing this now or that it will not do this in the future. At any event the materials presented in Chems seem to be the same that are presented in any good traditional course.

Generally it was brought out that the new instructor in Chems will have to learn his procedures by teaching the course. The teacher's manual helps a great deal. It is less costly than chemistry. It is generally safer than chemistry. It covers the same materials as traditional chemistry. General sentiment seems to support the movement toward this program and there seems to be no real reason for not supporting it, except that present offerings, if they are sound, are doing the job for high school students.



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