

Administrators queried on basics

# Survey shows 'Three R's are dead'

The "Three R's" are dead. At least that's what 149 Texas school administrators said in a survey conducted by two Texas A&M University researchers.

The poll, conducted by Dr. Lester S. Richardson and Research Associate Bob Carruthers, asked 209 Texas school leaders what subjects should be included in a basic education.

"If Texas educators reflect the mood of administrators across the country, the 'Three R's'—reading, writing, and arithmetic—will have to be changed to reading, arithmetic and personal hygiene," said Richardson, educational administration professor at Texas A&M. "The only 'R' all the educators could agree on was reading."

Educators were asked what they would do if their budgets had been drastically reduced and they could

only teach the basics, Richardson explained. They were given a questionnaire with 85 courses which ranged from arithmetic to sex education and with 11 major headings such as science, social science and foreign language.

"We figure with all this talk about going back to the basics we could find out what the basics were," Richardson added. "We couldn't."

"The response from the survey showed that the basics in education have yet to be defined," Carruthers said. "Until the definitions are made, school boards in Texas are wasting their time trying to go back to the basics. It's obvious they can't agree on what they are."

"One of the things this shows is school boards have to define what the basics are on a local level," he added. "You can't make one set of basics fit everyone. It's obvious a basic education in Houston wouldn't be what's considered a basic education in Bug Tussel."

Both Richardson and Carruthers point out that there is some danger in school districts throwing their

curricula into reverse and heading for the 'basic education'.

"The danger with the back-to-basics idea is that in some cases you wind up throwing the baby out with the bath-water," Carruthers mused. "In other words, we wind up losing some of the good things we've gotten, along with the bad. What we need is the best of both."

"People tend to look at a basic education as a cure-all," added Richardson. "There is no cure-all in education. The basics will change as the times change."

The top ten selections the educators made are: 1) reading; 2) arithmetic; 3) personal hygiene; 4) writing-cursive; 5) biology; 6) lifetime sports; 7) life science; 8) state history; 9) civics and 10) earth science.

Sports fans will be interested to note that football was ranked 21st out of 50, just below geometry. Economics, which is a required curriculum subject in grades 1-12 in Texas, was ranked below auto mechanics, in the number 30 position.

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# County agents attend refresher courses here

By SCOTT PENDLETON  
Battalion Staff

Over 1,000 staff members of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service are on campus for a week of speeches, tours, and refresher courses.

The staff members are county agents of the Extension Service. Their job is to demonstrate the latest innovations to farmers in their area.

During the week-long conference, the agents will attend one of 41 refresher courses on topics such as "sheep and goat production" and "weed identification and control." Courses on photography, creative writing, and visual arts will also be offered to help the agents communicate more effectively with farmers in their area.

The tours are intended to familiarize the agents with Texas A&M. For many, the biennial conference is their only opportunity to visit the campus.

"The conference also helps generate an esprit de corps," said Dr. William Tedrick, head of Agricultural Communications. The county agents can see that they are part of a

larger organization with important goals. The conference allows them to talk to each other and exchange ideas. "A&M is their home office," Tedrick said.

As a land-grant college, A & M administers the Extension Service, though apart from the teaching facilities.

The conference started Tuesday morning with a general meeting in Rudder Auditorium. Dr. Jack Williams, chancellor of the Texas A & M University System, welcomed the conferees in a general speech about the lessons of history and the importance of economic freedom.

Other speakers this week include Dr. Lorne Parker, director of instructional communications at the University of Wisconsin; Dorothee Polson, food editor of The Arizona Republic; and Dr. W. Neill Schaller, acting deputy director for Extension, USDA Science and Education Administration.

The closing session Friday will feature presentation of the Knapp-Porter Award. The award, the highest given by the Extension Service, recognizes outstanding contributions to agriculture and family living in Texas.

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