

EDITORIAL

How Satisfactory are STM and EMM?

The new program in junior high mathematics has been in use in Grade VII for two years and in Grade VIII for one year, and teachers have begun to develop opinions as to its strengths and weaknesses. One weakness often mentioned is the unsuitability of the text materials for the slow learner - the approximately 30 percent of the students at the lower end of the ability scale.

The unsuitability seems to result from several characteristics which fail to meet the requirements of the group in question:

- too high a level of reading ability needed,
- too much emphasis on "why" before "how",
- problem situations not closely enough related to the interests of the pupils.

If the teacher finds that these inadequacies exist or that the materials demand too much, he must do something about the situation. Certain measures are possible:

1. Be fully aware of the minimum requirements as set down by the Curriculum Guide. These may permit omission of some chapters or sections.
2. If that minimum is still too extensive, modify the work in a suitable manner. Not every word must be read; not every exercise has to be done.
3. Do not be a slave to verbalization, terminology and symbolism. A pupil can understand and apply an idea without being able to express it in mathematical language.

Finally, a question directed to the classroom teacher: Are you playing a sufficiently important role in curriculum change? Who knows better than you how effective the new programs are? The MCATA is your council, working to improve mathematics education in Alberta. Let the executive know what your opinions are!