

**SCIENCE UNIT BOXES:
OLD HAT AT MCGILL ***

There is nothing novel about the development of Science Unit Boxes by elementary school teaching candidates. In fact, students enrolled in elementary school science in the Faculty of Education at McGill University are expected to prepare a Science Unit which takes the form of a Materials Box and Resource File. This activity, a major and culminating assignment for the methods course since 1970, involves the preparation of a comprehensive multimaterials supply box as well as an appropriate set of pupil-oriented activities in the form of a conceptual scheme.

Prior to this, and as early as 1965, various forms of the Science Unit had been assigned to students. At the time, Professors William Searles and William Ramsey created modules and science boxes and used these as instructional materials for the elementary school science course. The students were then expected to develop similar units. These were sometimes quite large, extensive preparations, while other submissions were as small as the single-lesson shoebox variety.

The science methods course at McGill is based on the workshop pattern in which students are introduced to materials-centered science teaching. Throughout the semester, they are actively involved in the various aspects of building a science unit.

During these activities, the students are expected to select a conceptual scheme based on a topic of special interest or one with which they are most familiar and most comfortable. They then establish a set of objectives which involve major concepts as well as scientific processes.

The Faculty Curriculum Laboratory and the science teaching labs stock a wide variety of text books, teachers' manuals and commercially packaged kits. The students research this material in order to select appropriate inquiry-oriented science activities to fulfill preplanned objectives. These activities are often arranged on file cards for use by the teacher or the pupils.

Initial assignments for the methods course require students to construct classroom equipment and to prepare teaching aids. These become the nucleus of the supply box. Further materials are scrounged, borrowed, built and, when not available at home or in school, they are purchased. However, stress is placed on stocking a sufficient quantity of the teaching-learning material to carry out the Science Unit in an average class.

Students are usually able to try out and evaluate part of the prepared unit in an elementary classroom, either during a student teaching period or an internship situation. Revision of activities and rejection or alteration of some teaching aids may follow. Students also have the opportunity for important and effective evaluation of each others' science material during sessions held in the university class.

The final product is the "Science Unit Box." One or more containers are usually overflowing with bundles of supplies and teaching aids, posters, games, packages of work sheets, sound tapes, slides, information pamphlets, lists of available film and film strips, as well as a file box of activity cards - enough practical science material for the beginning teacher to use conveniently and enthusiastically.

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*A response to Mitchell E. Batoff, "The Unit Box Approach," which appeared in the Fall 1974 issue of the Journal. — Ed.