Making science 'user friendly' for minorities

An Oakland University education professor is helping Michigan achool districts develop kindergarten through 12th grade science curricula that are more "user friendly" for women and minorities.

Stereotypes portrayed in lesson plans or in uneonscious traits of the classroom teacher often combine to track minorities and women out of science, said Dawn Pickard of the OU School of Education and Human Services.

Pickard and OU are working as part of a group of universities, school districts, local schools and the Department of Education. They also we have been a morked to the committee and the school districts develop new science curricula throughout the state.

Pickard has received nearly \$80,000 in two competitive grants

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layer.

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Free auto emission test

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through the State Department of Ed-ucation to support her work on the project.

The OU professor explains that the Michigan program is dedicated to improving the sensitivity and awareness of teachers concerning equity issues in science curriculum development. A lot of little problems in text lan-guage and teaching styles can com-bine to send the wrong messages to women and minorities, Pickard said. The examples can be as overt as the use of only white males to portray

quires the tests before reregistering automobiles.

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The examples can be as overt as the use of only white males to portray carcers in space or as covert as a particular teaching style or questioning strategy.

As an example, Pickard offers the teacher who unintentionally asks males science questions requiring synthesizing of several concepts asks women questions requiring simple recall facts or information. Or, Pickard asys, look at the use of a teaching style that clusters male students around equipment to do experiments while the lemales take notes, watching science being done without ever getting their hands dirty.

"The mes-ages get through," Pick-"RESEARCII SHOWS that we have not done a good job in helping all women, men of color, hearing and sight impaired, and others who are physically disabled to enter seres in science." Pickard says.

Pickard's project will help school districts deal with the issue of equity—the development of science materials and teaching methods—that recognize multicultural concerns and strengths and how they impact on the learning process.

CUSTOM STYLES AND COLORS

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ard says, "science is for white male."

PICKARD SAYS teachers must learn to be more sensitive to the stereotyping of women and minorities and to realize that "meaning is constructed by all the many things in a person's mind, a powerful piece of which is cultural background." Teachers in all classrooms must realize that "culture colors behavior." For example, she says, "boys in some cultures are taught to be machen and to not respect females or even female teachers. Some femalestudents come from backgrounds where they are taught to be submissive and even expected to heave school at a certain date to enter an armaged marriage."

students may become uneasy when singled out in class for praise or for criticism."

The teachers feel that if the goal of science education is success for all learners, then "we need to be aware and sensitive to the beliefs hick bring to the classroom, even if they conflict with a teacher's beliefs of the norms of our culture.

As part of Pickard's project, thems of teachers and administrators from various school districts with terrained in developing science curricula that include and respect the diversity of people who do science.



Dawn Pickard QU professor

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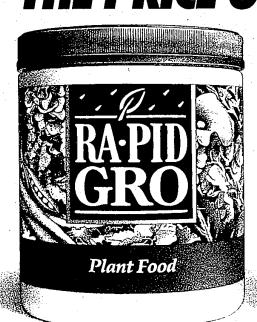


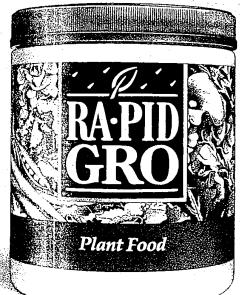
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