

'Overworked' committee has clout

By BARBARA UNDERWOOD

and seven school district residents who may or may not be parents.

A 28-member "blue ribbon committee" controls what courses will be offered to students in the Birmingham schools.

The curriculum council possibly has more power than the superintendent, board of education, administrators and teachers individually or collectively, in determining what more than 11,000 district students will study.

No curriculum decisions and no program course changes are made without first being approved by the curriculum council.

But despite the council's clout, any final decisions on programs and curriculum rest first with the superintendent and finally with the board of education.

School district policy determines council membership and responsibilities. The 28 curriculum council members include seven staff administrators, seven teachers, seven students

ALTHOUGH IT has not always been the case, there is now a waiting list of residents who would like to serve on the curriculum council. In the past, it has sometimes been difficult to find seven residents who were willing to give the time required for council membership.

They are "overworked volunteers," according to Dr. Michael LaBay, director of curriculum for the Birmingham schools.

"The board of education will not entertain any changes in programs or courses unless they have gone through the curriculum council first," LaBay said. "No courses are added or dropped, no textbooks approved, no graduation requirements authorized and no programs approved by the board without prior approval by the curriculum council."

Ninety per cent of the council's work

has to do with the review of courses, elementary programs and textbooks, he said.

Recent exceptions have been the council's review of a proposal to improve secondary composition instruction and consideration of the problems of staffing during declining enrollment.

DURING THE 1977-78 school year, the curriculum council approved 90 course additions, 79 course drops, eight major textbook adoptions, major supply purchases for art, updating of maps and globes in all schools in the district and staff increases for the FLEX and Language Arts Basics (LABS) programs.

The council also recommended an increase in credits given toward graduation for students in the cooperative program and addition of a composition course to graduation requirements.

The council meets monthly, September through May. At its next meeting

in September, it is expected to approve three "significant" programs which were reviewed during the 1977-78 year. They are: mandatory cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training for all 10th graders, reproductive health program to be taught to all eighth graders and selected senior high groups and a completely revised physical education teaching guide in both elementary and secondary classes.

These three recommendations just came out of committee in May," LaBay said.

Before the curriculum council considers a suggested course or program, other committees made up of other people spend countless hours researching the suggestion before presenting it to the council.

THESE PEOPLE, on district-wide curriculum committees composed of staff, community representatives and students, feed suggestions to the curriculum council.

Thursday, August 3, 1978

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