



Teachers Take Course On Sex-Role Stereotypes

"Eliminating sex-role stereotyping in the classroom" was studied by 19 Ridgefield teachers in five workshops over the last month.

The "mini-course" was conducted by Lyn Nevins of Cooperative Educational Services, a state financed organization based in Norwalk which, offers a number of special education services to area towns.

According to Ridgefield School Curriculum Coordinator Joseph Leheny, who arranged for the course, it is something recommended by the federal health education and welfare department, in the guidelines to the 1972 Higher Education Act. This federal law states that no discrimination on the basis of sex be allowed "under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

About a half of one percent of Ridgefield's education budget comes from the federal government.

The law is the same one which has forced many high schools, colleges and universities to open up athletic teams in all but rough "contact sports" to both men and women.

The mini-course began with a general awareness study of

pertinent sections of the federal law, and then workshops were held on sex-role stereotyping in curriculum materials, women in history, women in the labor force, and classroom strategies for change.

Much of the stereotyped material students are given is in text books, Mr. Leheny said.

Though the books are of value for other reasons, Mr. Leheny said that many text books and accompanying work books, "particularly older ones," depict life in a way which could reinforce sex-role stereotypes in the children that use them.

"The women are always shown washing dishes," Mr. Leheny said.

The federal law does not attempt to outlaw the use of such texts because schools all over the country would have to buy new books, and because such a move might be in conflict with the first amendment, Mr. Leheny said.

In addition to alerting teachers to stereotypes and ways they are reinforced, Mr. Leheny said the workshops sought to make teachers, and through them the students, more aware of contributions to our history and civilization, made by women.

STEREOTYPE STUDENTS—A few of the Ridgefield teachers at a workshop on sex-role stereotyping in the classroom. Marilyn Brown of Ridgebury School (at right, sitting), Adeline Merrill, (standing at right) and Antoinette Hert (sitting, center), both of East Ridge Junior High, and John Nicholson of Barlow Mountain School. Standing at the right is Lyn Nevins of Cooperative Educational Services, who conducted the workshops. — Photo by Angela D'Ostilio.

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