

## Real Learning Experiences for All



*Courtesy Long Beach (Calif.) Schools*

That many educational crimes have been committed in the name of the experience curriculum is probably not a statement of exaggeration. In fact, it is our conviction that many of the attacks made on modern education today are the result of well-meaning but unsound interpretations of what a true experience curriculum for learners implies.

“Progressive education means that youngsters don’t learn to read or use numbers efficiently.” That criticism most of us have encountered somewhere along

the line in our dealings with parents, lay people, and even fellow-educators. And, indeed, when we look at what happens in the name of education to some boys and girls we are tempted to agree that, in a few cases at least, this accusation may not be false. But those of us who are genuinely interested in good experience curriculums for all learners hasten to add that more schools today are characterized by almost a total lack of real learning experiences for children than by even a faulty interpretation of the experience curriculum and what it implies.

It is not our purpose here to define an experience curriculum. Our contributors have given specificity to the term by their accounts of a wide variety of what, we believe, are good learning experiences for boys and girls. In an experience curriculum, as we envision it, children will have experiences in living and learning that are real and important to them as individuals and as members of a social group; experiences that are tailored to their particular stage of development and their particular needs. In the total program of living and learning there is a place for learning to read—and for reading; for having vicarious as well as direct experience; for the developing of all the skills of the three R’s; for acquiring knowledge that citizens of our modern world need.

The contributors to this issue discuss the importance of child development as a basis for curriculum planning, the place of vicarious as well as direct experiences, the functional aspect of learning. They tell of real learning in teachers colleges as well as in elementary and secondary schools; in rural and urban communities. They illustrate how children and youth can have valuable experiences in problem solving, in mastering communication skills, in analyzing group processes, in participating in social action, in helping with city planning, and in improving human relations. The suggestions are many and varied. They point the way, we believe, to improved instructional programs in our schools.—GAH

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