

# Priorities in Education

## *An Editorial*<sup>1</sup>

During the years of World War II a generation of Americans learned to understand the meaning of "priority." Again, as the tempo of rearmament quickens priorities seem likely to be with us. This is almost inevitable as the delivery rate of military equipment mounts from \$4.5 billion in 1951 to \$12 billion in 1952.

The idea of priorities in education, in a very real sense, is comparable to the priority concept in the building of our national defenses. Indeed, thoughtful educators and laymen, alike, are beginning to recognize that *priority for educational needs is an integral part of national defense needs.*

Priority must be given to freeing the best possible educational thought and action in order to meet the problems of swollen school enrollments, the persisting dearth of competent classroom teachers (particularly in elementary schools), the too-limited tax basis for school support in many states, and the organized antagonism to liberal educational practices which has spread from city to city in recent years.

The Publications Committee, Editors and Advisory Editors, and Executive Committee of ASCD gave prolonged, careful thought to themes for the 1951-'52 issues of *Educational Leadership* as suggestions from the membership were received. One criterion, in making final selections was related to priorities in education. The monthly themes for the coming publication year as a result deal with topics, elements, and factors in education which seem most fully to merit priority.

► *In-service education.* The current issue of our journal proposes priority for in-service education. This was deemed important because it promises to help the profession conserve educational manpower as it is used more wisely, by compensating in part for the way in which turnover erodes the effectiveness of many school programs, and by meeting some of the problems posed by teachers with marginal preparation or those who are to be working with an age level for which they originally were not prepared.

► *Children and youth in today's crisis.* Next month some of the ways in which the great human resource represented by our school population receive priority-attention. Data available in 1950 indicated that the families of 8,000,000 children move annually, that 20% of the mothers of school-age children are gainfully employed, that 6,000,000 youngsters are orphaned or have but one parent, and that between 1938 and 1948 the number of children born out of wedlock increased by approximately 50%. The implications of such facts, as they affect children, deserve the most careful study and subsequent action by educators as does the emotional impact of our present unsettled era upon children.

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► *Schools and the search for peace.* How can we help, through education, to create minds of tolerance and mediation? The December issue will give precedence to the fundamental role of education in helping to make the future secure because it rests on a foundation of secure people who believe that there can and must be peace with honor in a world threatened by the destructive power set free by technology and science.

► *Significant curriculum issues.* Many controversies confronting education are long-standing impediments to progress. In the January, 1952, issue of *Educational Leadership* a serious effort will be made to "smoke them out" and to suggest ways in which they can be resolved so that they will no longer block progress by creating an indecisiveness inimical to better educational programs.

► *Citizens' participation in planning and action.* This is February's high-priority topic. With invariably dangerous, and sometimes crippling, attacks on the schools under way in many communities greater understanding and support are desperately needed for educational programs. Enlightened lay participation holds a bright promise for an early abatement of the criticisms which spring from the lack of understanding found when schools build barriers rather than bridges between campus and community.

► *New approaches to teacher education.* The Working Committee on Statistics for the recent White House Conference estimated that an increase of 25,000 teachers will be needed, on the average, *each year* between 1951 and 1960 to cope with the school enrollment bulge. The temptation to "mass-produce" teachers in the face of this demand is already great. The development of stronger rather than diluted teacher education programs deserves the priority it will receive in March of next year.

► *Better aids for learning.* A great deal of knowledge based upon research and upon the experience of capable teachers is but little used in thousands of school districts. If the "know-how" which this knowledge represents were put to effective use—if we taught as well as we know how to teach—progress in education would occur at a rate never before approached. Here, again, is an area in which attention is overdue and which is to be examined in April.

► *Schools foster experimentation.* The final issue of *Educational Leadership* for 1951-'52 will give priority to practical experimentation, to action research now being initiated and developed in American schools. Moral support, mutual encouragement, and mutual stimulation should be generated as school workers share their ideas, plans, and aspirations with regard to creating better environments for learning.

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*The 1950's already are fulfilling their promise of being the most critical ten-year period in many decades of public education. The value of the present and of forthcoming issues of Educational Leadership will reside, in large measure, in the success with which readers are motivated to think courageously and to act wisely in giving priority to problems stemming from the basic educational needs upon which the monthly themes of our journal are based.*

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