

Significant Books in Review

Column Editor: Paul M. Halverson
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Helping Children Learn: A Concept of Elementary-School Method. By Peggy Brogan and Lorene K. Fox. New York: World Book Company, 1955.

Helping Children Learn meets a long standing need for a text on elementary school teaching methods. This new volume draws the practical implications of basic concepts of child development, mental hygiene, and learning for all aspects of classroom teaching. From the first chapter in which the authors set the required conditions for learning to the final discussion of creative living in the classroom, the reader is continually helped to see how the nature of children and their needs for learning are related to effective classroom practices. Ideas growing from such concepts as self-selection in learning, the biosocial nature of learning, and the need of children for first-hand experiences in understanding today's world and in contributing to the solution of immediate problems are applied to each of the elementary school curriculum areas. The result is a concept of teaching which is consistent with children's needs and which makes sense in achieving the maximum development of children.

One of the most important contributions of this book, in the opinion of this reviewer, is the dynamic way in which the concept of self-selection in

learning has been defined in terms of classroom practices. Detailed descriptions of practices growing from the need for self-selection are given and the effects on the learning of children are pointed out. Along with these descriptions the authors very carefully point out the teacher planning and guidance necessary for the effective functioning of self-selection.

The titles of the seven chapters of the book give some indication of the importance the authors attach to the need for having learning serve the development of children: Required Conditions for Learning, Skilled Communication Is Power, Arithmetic Works for Children, Children Can Learn to Use Science, Using Our Cultural Heritage, Learning to Organize Movement—Physical Education, and Living Together Creatively.

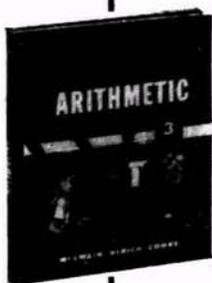
The discussions of helping children learn the language and arithmetic skills are as fine as any this reader has seen. The sections on science and social studies, however, do not present as careful a picture of the teaching-learning situation as do the other sections. This is actually a minor criticism because the material included in these sections is excellent; it is not as specifically directed to teaching practices as it might be. Much space is given to showing the need for science and social studies in the elementary school curriculum and good descriptions of

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experiences provided for children in a number of classrooms are presented. Some teachers may need additional help in seeing the way such experiences are organized into a program for children. The last section does much to overcome this shortage. In an excellently written chapter on creative living in the classroom the authors show how the classroom atmosphere can enable children to develop skills which will contribute directly to creative social living.

The book is richly illustrated with actual photographs of children. Appropriate quotations from writers in many related fields are used as effectively as are the pictorial illustrations.

—Reviewed by KENNETH D. WANN, professor of education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City.

Child Drama. By Peter Slade. New York: Philosophical Library, 1955.

I can think of few people who would not find this book powerful, provocative and challenging. After sharing Peter Slade's observations and interpretations, teachers and parents will find child play even more fascinating; those of us who have promoted the idea of accepting dramatizations of children as their creative expressions will gather support from this eminent actor and producer; and students of child growth and development will find their observations of a child, especially his movements, sharpened.

This book initiates for child drama what is now quite widely accepted for child art. Child drama develops into adult theatre of the most artistic calibre just as a child grows into an adult; yet child drama is no more adult the-

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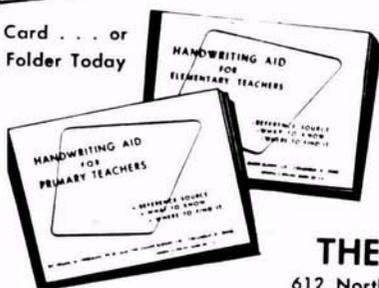
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atre than is a boy a diminutive man. In all child drama there is freedom from adult standards. What is learned by the child is tried out—played. It is proved by being physically and emotionally experienced. Thus does child drama contribute both to learning to live and to the love of learning. Peter Slade reminds us that with a child there is no audience, that the child is actor and audience. As we apply adult ideas borrowed from the stage, child drama deteriorates because creativity is wiped out.

This book will certainly shake its readers from the ruts of smugness which frequently accompany much experience with children. Suggestions are made about discipline, the use of make-up, scenery, costuming, script plays and

dance forms; the role of the adult in working with the children; the therapeutic values of language and play. The material is organized into three parts: (a) observation and theory which serve to orient the reader to the subject and to a thorough understanding of Peter Slade's concept of child drama; (b) reports and practices which have been used in schools to nurture child drama at every stage from babyhood to the intermediate years; (c) discussion on the various types of "Children's Theatre," the status of each, and its place and value; an assessment of puppets and marionettes, films, masks and make-up.

—Reviewed by ETHEL M. THOMPSON, elementary supervisor, Public Schools, Arlington County, Virginia.

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