

# Significant Books in Review

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**Frontiers of Elementary Education II: Proceedings of a Conference on Elementary Education.** Edited by Vincent J. Glennon. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1955. p. v. plus 71.

In reviewing a compilation of addresses purportedly on the frontiers of elementary education, one must deal with at least two pertinent questions: (a) To what degree is each paper truly frontier in the ideas presented? (b) To what degree does the selection of topics present a range of content likely to be of interest to a random audience of professional persons in the field of elementary education?

The viewpoints of those setting up the Second Annual Conference on Elementary Education (Summer 1955) at Syracuse University would have been helpful in reviewing the Proceedings. The reviewer considered an address to be frontier if it succeeded in:

1. Clarifying the nature of an issue that still must be resolved, or
2. Presenting a point of view that is sufficiently fresh to stimulate new approaches to recurring concerns in elementary education, or
3. Describing or analyzing a practice that is relatively new and pioneering, or
4. Analyzing trends in such way that new directions for action become apparent, or

5. Opening the door to considerations in the field that have failed to capture our attention to any significant degree in the past.

Obviously, these criteria are limited and arbitrary. Quite likely there are other more significant ones.

Each article in the compilation readily satisfies at least two of the five criteria. In E. T. McSwain's introductory address, cutting across a wide range of concerns, he strikes into and takes an unequivocal stand on the current and very controversial question of responsibility for designing curriculum and instruction:

I think it timely that administrators and teachers examine the probable consequences to the teaching profession of the practice used in many communities of asking the people through consensus polls what they think the schools should teach. Designing the objectives, the content and instructional methods of the curriculum is a professional job.

The paper by Mildred M. Landis, the J. Richard Street Lecture of 1955, presents a penetrating analysis of visual arts function in the schools. Not only does she sound a much-needed word of caution for those who would interpret "expression" too loosely, but in addition she succeeds in grappling more successfully than do most writers in the field with the elusive "common denominator" idea that permits guid-

ance of the young creator without imposition of rigidity.

Nelson Brooks' address on foreign language learning in the lower grades and Robert Anderson's address on the ungraded primary school effectively describe and analyze practice in two areas that only recently have captured a portion of the national spotlight. William D. Sheldon's major contribution is a much-needed identification of the respective and complementary roles of parents, teachers, and commercial interests in teaching the child to read. Helen Hay Heyl uses the past to develop understanding of the present in identifying curriculum trends in the State of New York. The last two papers, by Leonard W. Mayo and Ruth Strang, on the handicapped and the gifted, succeed not only in outlining the newer philosophy in regard to educating these groups but also in showing where full implementation of such philosophy may well carry us in the years ahead.

Obviously, a wide range of content is covered in these few pages—home-school relations, instructional method, school organization, curricular trends, special education. The professional will find enough exploration of key issues to arouse his interest and, perhaps, to revise his own point of view somewhat. This little volume would be particularly useful for a lay person, perhaps a critic, seeking a readable overview of modern philosophy and trends in selected fields of elementary education.

—Reviewed by JOHN I. GOODLAD, professor of education; director, Division of Teacher Education and Agnes Scott-Emory Teacher Education Program, Emory University, Georgia.

**Psychology and Teaching** By **William C. Morse and G. Max Wingo**. New York: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1955; and **The Diagnosis and Treatment of Learning Difficulties**. By **Leo Brueckner and Guy L. Bond**. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955.

*Psychology and Teaching* succeeds nicely in filling that gap keenly felt by many students and teachers who have thought an educational psychology book to be either a chatty review of common-sense things or a collection of isolated factual information quite remote from the everyday problems of teaching. It focuses the knowledge obtained from research on a number of vividly portrayed teaching situations and through examination of each setting as a whole and in parts relates the usual knowledge and principles to these situations. With this major variation in approach it attempts "to help the student learn in the same way he expects to teach." It is doubtful that it guarantees all of that, but it avoids thereby both the abstract and the too simple.

The need for a common situation to examine and to discuss, to consider in the light of information about growth, about how we learn, and about what makes good evaluation has regularly been expressed by teachers of educational psychology. Cumbersome arrangements for firsthand observation reportedly often fail. With increasing numbers to accommodate in observation programs, it seems only likely that problems will merely multiply. The helpful inclusion of two chapters describing classroom situations, with additional case examples added all along,

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should help satisfy much of the desire for common discussion ground.

Another general criticism is that books launch immediately into detailed recitals of facts about physical growth or begin with stuffy lectures on the "where" and "when" of psychology and the methods of psychologists. The authors neatly solve this latter problem as well as provide a synopsis of general psychology by placing in the final quarter of the volume a manual of carefully selected information usually found in general psychology books. They run the risk, of course, of omissions and of conveying to students the idea, despite ample warning, that there is not too much to general psychology. In accepting the risk, though, they do make available a review for some, introduce a further reading challenge for others, and free the text proper from lengthy basic explanatory information.

The data on how children grow are happily postponed to the fourth chapter. This makes possible an excellent introduction to who should teach and for what purpose. In this there is recognition of the fact that many who take educational psychology have given little thought to what teaching involves, what goals are sought, what equipment used, etc.

The section of the volume devoted to tasks for the student includes some exercises more commonly contained in workbooks. The purpose of including this material in the text is to help students in locating additional instruments for study. The tasks should serve well to fix under familiar headings the concepts sought in discussions.

One other recognized complaint of preservice teachers is expertly handled

in a clear explanation of what modern discipline may mean, of what conditions lead to personal and group disintegration, of what kinds of teacher approaches work in bringing about the maturing insisted upon as the goal of teaching.

*The Diagnosis and Treatment of Learning Difficulties* is a more specific and advanced volume. In it the experienced elementary teacher will find a rich resource to guide her in the regular classroom study and adaptation the authors feel she can do. Although the volume by virtue of space is limited to learning difficulties in the traditional grade skills, the lack should not prove overly disappointing to the teacher who wants concrete detail. There are logical steps, tools, examples, outlines for ap-

proach, pep talks—all that the hard-working and tool-wanting harried teacher requires. Happily, there is a limited amount of broad generalization and a minimum amount of repetition of the obvious.

The initial chapters deal with learning difficulties in general. Although there might be more attention to stimulating the teacher to attend to diagnosis and adaptation and to a more extended treatment of the problems of social and emotional development, growth in values, attitudes and concepts as these relate to the learning of basic skills, the coverage is adequate and concludes with some sensible and well-defined principles.

It is obvious that there is much to do in real professional diagnosis and treat-



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ment. The teacher's share here is considered a large one. In fact, one wonders how the average teacher can do well all the things so ably set out for her to do in getting better growth in reading, arithmetic, language, handwriting, and spelling. Regardless, the positively inclined teacher has in this volume more than enough to support her. What to look for, how to look for it, what weight to place on different factors, how to use standardized instruments, what to include in home-made tools—all are discussed.

Perhaps the most refreshing notion in the book is that good diagnosis and good teaching are not remedial teaching.

—Reviewed by JOSEPH LEESE, *professor of education, Albany State College for Teachers, Albany, New York.*

#### Other Current Publications

A number of valuable books have been received during the current year, but for varied reasons have not been reviewed. Some volumes likely to be of interest to readers of *Educational Leadership* include the following:

**Guidance.** A notable reference book, issued through the editorial cooperation of Teachers College, Columbia University, and the University of London Institute of Education, is **The Year Book of Education: 1955** (World Book Co., 1955). The third volume to be jointly sponsored, the 1955 issue treats "Guidance and Counseling" in a world-wide setting. It is edited by R. K. Hall and J. A. Lauwerys and contains authoritative articles by experts in all parts of the globe.

Robert H. Matthewson's **Guidance Policy and Practice** (Harper, 1955) is

a thoroughly revised edition of a first-rate synthesis of practice and theory originally published in 1949.

Also of value as well as interest to the administrator is Glen Eye and Willard Lane, **The New Teacher Comes to School** (Harper, 1955). Problems that are sometimes ignored or soft-pedalled are considered frankly and optimistically.

**Social Education.** Some years ago four University of Illinois professors collaborated on an unusual compilation of readings with a bearing on education. Sociology, anthropology, political science, and psychology were the main disciplines which they combed. Their preliminary work has now been handsomely rewritten and republished as **Social Foundations of Education** (Dryden, 1956). The authors are W. O. Stanley, B. Othanel Smith, Kenneth Benne (now at Boston University), and Archibald W. Anderson. ASCD members, especially those who long have recognized the importance of the contributions of other disciplines to education, will find this comprehensive book a "must" on their professional shopping list.

Maurice Hunt and Lawrence Metcalf have made an important contribution to social education with **Teaching High School Social Studies** (Harper, 1955). No re-hash, this volume vigorously develops the field in terms of method and content with ample stress upon what seems to constitute desirable subject matter in a democratic society. The result is a rich mixture of philosophy and logical application.

—Reviewed by HAROLD G. SHANE, *professor of education, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.*

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