

# Significant Books in Review

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**The High School in a New Era. Edited by Francis S. Chase and Harold S. Anderson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.**

This book records the papers presented by 38 speakers at the Conference on the American High School, October 28-30, 1957. This meeting was sponsored by the University of Chicago in collaboration with the National Citizens Council for Better Schools. The roster of authors includes historians, scientists and economists as well as professional educators and lay people with primary interests in secondary education. As a summary of such a convocation the book serves to dramatize the wide range of problems, viewpoints, and panaceas which are being considered currently in the effort to improve American secondary education. The volume contains a number of provocative papers, but cumulatively it has no points to make which have not been advanced elsewhere, and in most cases with greater depth and clarity.

The book is organized into seven sections as follows:

I. The American High School Is Viewed in the Perspectives of History, Comparative Education, Philosophy, and Present Needs

II. New Conditions Arising from Science and Technology Are Analyzed for Educational Implications

III. Concepts, Values, and Criteria Are

Offered for the Redirection of American Secondary Education

IV. Current Innovations in High-School Practice Are Described and Some Proposals for the Future Are Presented

V. The Planning and Administration of the High School Are Examined with Special Attention to the Responsibilities of Citizens

VI. Consideration Is Given to Guidance, School-College Relationships, the Needs of Fast and Slow Learners, and Achievement Standards

VII. Specific Suggestions Are Offered for Mathematics, Science, and Vocational Education.

To this reviewer Parts I and II seem pedestrian in their treatment of areas of national and international significance for education, although Henry Steele Commager and James B. Conant raise some old issues from fresh perspectives, the result of current developments on the educational scene here and in Europe.

Part III offers some creative ideas for reevaluating the high school and its role in current cultural change. Of particular interest are the refreshing cautions from Reuben G. Gustavson on the necessity of maintaining a balance between science and the humanities, and Jacob Getzels' discussion of the problem of value-acquisition in our schools and in our society.

The rest of the book is a potpourri of presentations of various aspects of

administrative arrangements, curricular practices, special services, and public relations for secondary schools. Having completed the reading of the book and the commentary on the conference by Henry Toy, Jr., one is left with many doubts about the adequacy of treatment given to the "big questions" as defined by Toy. As he points out, the reader can agree fairly well with many of the highly generalized and theoretical statements made, but it is clear that many imponderables remain as such when these generalities are translated into meanings for individual schools, teachers and pupils.

It gives one pause to consider what values stem from large national conferences, other than the enhancement of public relations for the sponsoring association or institution and the refreshment of meeting old friends and making new ones. These are not undesirable outcomes, but must be weighed against the output of energy, time and money, in this case in the hope of outlining purposes, plans and procedures for "the high school in a new era."

—PAUL M. HALVERSON, *professor of education, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.*

**The Identification and Education of the Academically Talented Student in the American Secondary School.**  
*Washington, D.C.: The National Education Association, 1958.*

The National Education Association, aided by a grant from the Carnegie Foundation, invited 200 selected educators and laymen from all parts of the nation to meet in Washington on February 6, 7 and 8, 1958. The conference chairman was James B. Conant. The book is composed of the collected documentation of the conference; the major

addresses, the discussions and the summaries of discussion groups. As a result, the book reads somewhat unevenly. The prepared papers by selected speakers are smooth and powerful treatises. The summaries of discussions, in contrast, jolt along on major ideas so closely packed that the reader gets a rough ride. However, the concentrated ideas are vitally important ones and the book is clearly rich fare.

The discussions are directed principally toward the schooling of not more than one-fifth of the pupils in junior and senior high schools. At the same time it is recognized that improving the quality of education for the other four-fifths of the pupils presents challenges quite as demanding and equally important. Actually, it seems that better opportunities for our most able pupils almost certainly will be paralleled by

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Two other points are made repeatedly. One: urgently as we may need scientists and engineers, we must not allow science and mathematics to over-ride the rest of the curriculum. We also urgently need linguists, philosophers, writers, statesmen, educators. Second: the schools must not be panicked into a crash program of spectacular but hasty and ill-advised action. A program of education adequate for the era upon which mankind is entering demands farsighted, creative, comprehensive planning by school people, lay citizens, and leaders in government.

The conference endorsed the Advanced Placement Program of the College Entrance Examination Board as one of the best means for improving the quality of instruction for outstanding

students. Almost every conference session reported this observation: the talented pupils ought to be identified and their curricula strengthened earlier, as early as the fourth grade if possible.

The entire conference proceeded on the basic assumption that English, foreign languages, mathematics, the social sciences, and the natural sciences are the substance of any program for academically talented pupils. There was, however, much discussion of the necessity for substantial programs in art, music, physical education, home economics, and industrial arts to balance the lives of bright youngsters. Not one proposal was made to cut the time for these subjects in favor of the more academic subjects.

There was general agreement that the secondary school program must be built upon a day of at least seven periods, and that the traditional study hall of a hundred or more pupils—so far as the abler student is concerned—is a waste of time. Unrestricted access to a fine library is quite another thing. The academically talented should learn very early not only to use but to love a library, and a fundamental consideration of any school that wishes to provide adequate education for these pupils should be the provision of suitable library facilities and time to use these resources.

Who should be considered for advanced work? The best prospects are pupils who score high on both IQ tests and achievement tests. The next best are those who score high on achievement tests but only average on IQ tests. Still a good bet are those who score high on IQ tests but low on achievement. And if neither IQ tests nor achievement tests indicate that a youngster is at least one standard deviation above the norm, then

there is only about one chance in 14 that he will make an outstanding record, no matter how highly his teachers think of him.

One important caution was made by John M. Stalnaker, head of the National Merit Scholarship program:

One of the current dangers of our entire educational system is the tendency to reward conformity and to place a high premium on the lad usually described as the well-rounded, all-American youth . . . a society such as ours . . . encourages . . . the organization man, the social and intellectual conformist, the well-balanced and well-adjusted individual, and tends to discourage if not suppress the unique, the different, the independent, the pioneer. For the pupil who has special abilities, special interests, and ample energy, there is no reason why he should not be encouraged to be himself, and if that self does not fit into the standard "round" mold, perhaps we should let him have a few sharp edges and not attempt to smooth them off. (p. 25-26)

The conference heartily endorsed the movement sponsored by the National Science Foundation to pay teachers for summer study that fosters greater scholarship on the part of the teacher. Teachers of English, foreign languages, mathematics, and the social studies should likewise have their way paid for such study, and if private funds cannot be secured, school moneys should be used for the purpose. Emphasis was placed on graduate study and research in the subject field—not that educational method is scorned but at present teachers are likely to be more adequate in method than in subject, at least for work with brilliant students.

The conference recommended ability grouping, recognizing that the method must vary from school to school. In some schools this means grouping within a

classroom; in other schools, ability selected classes. Another alternative is the special group, or seminar, composed of able pupils from several classes, several grades, or even several schools.

These brief highlights of the book illustrate the scope of the conference. For those readers who wish to discover, in highly concentrated form, what 200 leading educators and concerned laymen are thinking about the gifted, this book is highly recommended.

—LLOYD B. JONES, *director, Department of General Curriculum Services, Denver Public Schools, Colorado.*

#### Impact of Scholarship

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aid in a sounder perspective. We should think of this aid as supplementing the process of getting the student to college rather than as the basic reason for his going to college.

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