

# Significant Books in Review

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**The High School in a Changing World.** *American Association of School Administrators. Thirty-Sixth Yearbook.* Washington, D. C.: the Association, a department of the National Education Association, 1958.

At a time when pressures are great for speeding up the production of scientists and engineers; at a time when there is a feeling among some influential people that the secondary school should be primarily concerned with the education of those with greatest ability, it is gratifying to hear the leading group of school administrators in this country affirm with clear voice and strong faith that only as the educational program of the high school contributes to the development of every boy and girl can it serve a democratic society. This emphasis upon the uniqueness and worth of each individual and upon the responsibility of the school to help him grow in self-realization and social effectiveness is, in fact, the unifying theme of the thirty-sixth yearbook of the AASA.

In stressing the individual and his personal-social needs, the authors recognize all degrees of ability from the least to the most brilliant. Committed to a program in which the growth of each individual is central, the writers of the yearbook recognize the limitations of present secondary school organization. They urge the development of comprehensive programs which provide both a much enriched general education through which

social unity may be achieved and a vigorous specialized education where the individual may develop the powers necessary for fulfillment of his plans beyond high school, whether professional or immediately vocational. Here emphasis is upon behavioral goals and upon the need for a guidance program which is inherent in the curriculum and which grows out of the necessity for designing learning experiences consistent with the personal-social needs of individuals. Experimental programs are cited, ranging from those initiated in the Eight-Year Study of School and College in the 1930's to the most recent "Random Falls Idea" of schools within schools and of programs which reach out into community life.

The authors of the yearbook see the secondary school as a logical center for coordinating all efforts that contribute to the welfare of youth. Support is given this idea by recognition of the need for a community approach to the education of young people and an increasing use of community resources in bringing life and school together.

New relationships between school and college are emerging after the long struggle of the school to reconstruct its programs free of college domination. Joint school and college planning and scheduling are suggested as ways of solving present difficulties of multiple applications, poor timing, and poor communication. Already in some localities school-college coordinators are at work furthering these new relationships.

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In chapters dealing with school organization and staffing and with the leadership role of the principal, the Yearbook Commission points out the changing character of secondary school administration. Increasing use of clerical staffs and assisting professional personnel is freeing the administrator for leadership in planning, organizing, supervising, and evaluating the total program of the school.

Chapters on district planning and school housing urge the adaptation of organization and physical plant to the central purpose of the school—meeting the needs of individual students and creating environments to foster cooperative planning and learning. Illustrations are given of imaginative, new ways of providing workable units within the large high schools which are characteristic of urban building. Reference is made to proposals for school buildings

which have “the ultimate in space, fluidity, versatility and convertibility.”

As the authors look forward to the possibilities of the new high school, they are aware of the major weaknesses of most of the high schools of today: orientation to the past, lack of a coordinating philosophy, textbook and subject centered curriculum, lack of cooperative planning among teachers, supervisors, and administrators, and lack of behavioral goals. They regret that “significant innovations in curriculum structure and content are reported only by the venturesome few.”

A yearbook which is concerned with so large and controversial a topic as the place of the high school in a changing world cannot provide extensive help to administrators or indicate many specific ways to improve programs and increase the quality of human relationships in a school. It can, however, state a point of

view and illustrate a democratic philosophy in practice. This the 1958 Yearbook has done.

—Reviewed by PRUDENCE BOSTWICK, professor of education, San Fernando Valley State College, Northridge, California.

**Some Things Worth Knowing. A Generalist's Guide to Useful Knowledge.**  
By Stuart Chase. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958. 278 p.

Chase distinguishes between two types of knowledge. General knowledge is that which everyone should know in day-by-day living for intelligent judgments and decisions. Special knowledge is that which people need to know for livelihood, hobbies or for pleasure. Obviously, intelligent citizens need both. In times of stress, however, special knowledge appears to be considered the more practical and important of the two, at

least in the short run. The large amounts of outside funds available for special education attest to this fact.

This book is a description of the education of the generalist. He is the person who must make the decisions in public affairs—for only the generalist, says Chase, can be trusted to make decisions affecting the welfare of all.

Most people have made no serious attempt to discriminate between knowledge which is most important and knowledge which is least important. The unassorted, unrelated mass of information that many people possess cannot therefore be utilized efficiently, says Chase. How can this discrimination be made? What knowledge is of most worth? Chase's answer is found throughout his book. The generalist should possess knowledge held together by sequences and ideas and he should have an appreciation of relationships between fields of

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study. These are the things most worth knowing. Armed with overarching ideas, or a knowledge framework, the generalist can look up the facts for himself.

The choice of topics for the education of the generalist is a purely personal one, admits Chase, and he invites others to prepare their own lists. He starts his outline in the broadest frame, the study of the universe and what science now knows about it. From here he proceeds to the solar system and then to the history of the earth and how life began. Then five chapters deal with the evolution of civilization from hunting and farming to the most civilizing agency of all, the city. The mass of historical data poses a problem. What history is of most worth for the generalist? He might, says Chase, do three things:

First, he can deliberately turn specialist in respect to his own country, not an intensive specialist of course, but enough to capture the outline of its development and its relations to other countries. He can extend this study to his own broad civilization, whether Arabic, European, East Indian, Chinese. Second, he can choose for study some other country and period, both to experience the delights of exploration and to acquire perspective by comparison with his own culture. For Americans, I would suggest a country in the Orient: Japan, Iran, Thailand; for Orientals, the reverse: France, Sweden, the United States. Third, he can acquire an understanding of the great cultural changes, especially technological, which have leaped national frontiers to affect people everywhere.

From history, Chase turns to theories of cultural development, and to such human activities as language, economics, political behavior, and scientific discovery, which he relates to religion and art. And the big ideas? The theory of continuous creation, the replacement of ab-

solutes by relatives, the limits and capabilities of men, universal ideas and customs found in every culture, the disparity between classical theories of economics and actual practiced economic behavior, the sophistication of so-called "primitive" languages; these are among the many ideas that should be a part of the generalist's fund of knowledge. These are useful ideas for they help to satisfy deep curiosity, they help man to act sensibly and they provide a framework of knowledge which aids in the ordering of other knowledge.

What shall the schools teach? What shall be conceived as general education and what special education? As generalists, in what areas of knowledge are we educators lacking? *Some Things Worth Knowing*, if not answering these questions, will at least stimulate a search for the answers.

—Reviewed by HOWARD B. LEAVITT, associate professor of education, Boston University, Massachusetts.

**Public Education in America. Edited by George Z. F. Bereday and Luigi Volpicelli. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958.**

*Public Education in America* purports to be "a new interpretation of purpose and practice" of education in this country. In asserting that the validity of the American system springs from its originality, the editors have marshaled a well-documented set of papers, each attesting in its sphere to the unity of purpose and diversity of practice found in the schools.

Since greater public understanding of public education requires, above all, greater appreciation of the problems—current and historical—which beset the schools, the choices in this collection are timely and crucial. Focusing on current



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sociological questions of wide import to the curriculum, the essays by Havighurst, Bereday, Wayland, and Tewksbury balance the historical and statistical emphasis found abundantly in other chapters of the book.

The best parts of the volume, however, are two short essays by R. Freeman Butts and William O. Stanley. As well-chosen end papers for the volume these essays delineate the aspiration and the promise of American education with greater clarity and sharpness than is discernible elsewhere in the publication.

If the book as a whole is less persuasive than volumes written singly by some of the authors included, it can be ascribed to the fact that the editors neglect to use any perceivable organizing element to focus on the crucial points of their argument. A collection or symposium offers an editor freedom to use his imaginative powers in arranging

seemingly disparate chapters into categories that suggest creative organization. Failure to provide this needed emphasis constitutes the most serious shortcoming of their effort.

With due recognition of the difficulties attending an interpretive work on education, one might lament also the dearth of editorial and interpretive material accompanying these essays. This is most clearly seen in the selection of Bereday's essay on "The Race Problems in American Education." Taking into account the indigenously American backgrounds of most of the contributors, one regrets that the single essay by an editor deals with a rather specific sociological problem rather than with a general interpretive theme.

Finally, in view of the current interest in the secondary curriculum—particularly in proposals such as those by Conant, the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, and others—the attention accorded this vital area of American education is hardly sufficient. Although Paul Hanna, in a brief review of the attacks on public schools, sketches the major defensive arguments made for the present program of studies, his essay omits outstanding positive attempts to vitalize the high school curriculum. It would seem that any "new interpretation" of educational practice should assess such current efforts as the improvement of general education through core programs, the introduction of work-experience programs, the use of the community as a laboratory for civic training, or the promising developments in the education of early adolescents in junior high schools.

—VICTOR B. LAWHEAD, *assistant dean, Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana.*

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