

Significant Books

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Modern Secondary Education: Basic Principles and Practices. *William M. Alexander and J. Galen Saylor.* New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc. 1959. 765 p.

"We had the best of educations," said the Mock Turtle in his story to Alice . . . "I only took the regular course."

"What was that?" inquired Alice.

"Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with," the Mock Turtle replied; "and then the different branches of Arithmetic—Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision. . . ."

"What else had you to learn?"

"Well, there was Mystery," the Mock Turtle replied, counting off the subjects on his flappers,—"Mystery, ancient and modern, with Seaography: then Drawling—the Drawling-master was an old conger-eel that used to come once a week: he taught us Drawling, Stretching, and Fainting in Coils. . . ."

While Reeling, Writhing, and Fainting in Coils sometimes seem to be present in the current educational scene, authors Alexander and Saylor in *Modern Secondary Education* deal with such matters in a direct, affirmative style. The book represents an impressive undertaking—to deal with the many and complex issues in secondary education. *Modern Secondary Education* is a complete rewriting of the earlier work published in 1950 entitled *Secondary Education*.

Even though the content of the book has been substantially changed in re-writing, the purpose as indicated by the preface remains the same:

. . . designed as a source of information and ideas for all who work or plan to work in secondary schools . . . persons preparing to be secondary school teachers . . . to give enough information about innovative practices to stimulate the beginners to examine all practices critically; . . . to help the experienced teacher in his search for better ways of working.

By delineating issues and suggesting approaches and resources, the authors give assistance to those persons concerned with the curriculum and organization of a secondary school. For example, teachers and administrators will find useful the chapters on criticisms and defenses of American public education. Chapters dealing with secondary education in England, France, West Germany and Russia describe the school programs in those countries and give enough of the history to indicate why each pattern has evolved. This information complements the review of factors that shape secondary education and the various purposes of the secondary school in this country. Such background is essential for the individual attempting to intelligently develop or appraise his own objectives, or value system.

Materials standard to a course in secondary education are included by the authors in their sections on: Teacher and Pupils in Secondary School, The Secondary School in American Life, Teaching in the Secondary School, and The Administrative Structure of Secondary Schools. Accompanying these sections are up-to-date tables and charts on salaries, pupils in school, projections of population, check sheets, patterns of course enrollments, examples of representative practices, and the like, as well as extensive footnotes and annotated bibliographies for further research and thought.

Of significance and help is the emphasis of the book on the curriculum of the American secondary school. In order to get a comprehensive picture of similarities and differences in American schools, the following topics are treated as individual chapters:

What Does the Secondary School Curriculum Include?

Critical Issues in Relating the Curriculum and the Needs of Pupils

Providing for the Common Needs—General Education

The Core Curriculum Approach to Common Needs

The Curriculum for Specialized Education

Relating the Community and the Curriculum

While the authors take a stand in their recommendations, they do not exclude other points of view from their considerations. They state:

... The American system of secondary education is a truly remarkable achievement, one that stands unique among the educational systems of the modern world. The almost universal attendance, the broad and varied curriculum, and the concern for the individual pupil are among the distinctive and exceptional features of the American system.

... These problems and issues, as we see them, have revolved and continue to revolve about a central question: Can we maintain a high quality of education for each individual while attempting to educate virtually all youth in secondary schools? We believe that America's answer to this question has been affirmative, and that it will become even more positively so.

One who seeks definitive answers to educational problems may be disappointed in this book. One who seeks an organized departure point for thinking through many of the issues of secondary education will find this source very helpful. Unlike the discussion of curriculum in *Alice in Wonderland*, this text deals with *Modern Secondary Education* in a realistic, straightforward, practical manner. And, as the Gryphon said in a very decided tone to Alice, "That's enough about lessons."

—Reviewed by LESLEE J. BISHOP, chairman, Combined Studies Department, Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois.

Modern Methods in Elementary Education. Merle M. Ohlsen, editor. New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1959. 688 p.

A recent trend toward comprehensive books on elementary education written by a team of authors is well illustrated here. In a volume of 20 chapters and 688 pages, 14 members of the University of Illinois staff set out to present a complete picture of what a young teacher should know. It is perhaps more a result of the difficulty and complexity of the task than of a lack of skill and knowledge on the part of the authors that the attempt is not entirely successful.

Eleven of the chapters deal with subject matter areas in the elementary curriculum. Specialists present an overview

of modern methods in each field. Chapters on teaching foreign languages and industrial arts discuss areas not often represented.

Each reader will find his own favorites in this group but there are some which clearly merit attention. There are individual chapters devoted to art experience as a part of the process of learning ("When I paint a picture I think about something and then I put down my think."); to a varied music program which has a place for every child ("By committing ourselves to a curriculum designed to foster growth in all children on whatever level they may be we do not imply that we must do less for the musically gifted child."); and so forth.

The remainder of the book is concerned with the special areas of discipline, appraising pupils' personal and mental growth, instructional materials as a basis for curriculum decisions, use of the textbook, teaching exceptional children, guidance and parent-teacher relations. Not included are related areas of planning and curriculum organization except as these areas are discussed in relation to the specific subject matter divisions.

One difficulty in such a team approach to curriculum problems is the need for some clear conception of point of view or basic orientation. Members of the writing group apparently considered this aspect of their task and worked together during the planning of their book while they were all members of the University of Illinois staff. There is reference in several places to a "philosophy of teaching" to which the various authors subscribe. It is unfortunate, though, that no clear statement of such philosophy emerges and that the concept of democratic leadership seems to be described

largely in terms of a plan for using pupil assistants in the classroom.

Since the days of the one room school creative teachers have provided opportunities for children to help each other. The present discussion, however, which emphasizes the value but says little about the limitations of such procedures, is bound to be interpreted by many as another easy way to enable one teacher to deal with increasingly larger groups.

As a guide for beginning teachers, *Modern Methods in Elementary Education* is too brief to give the specific help needed in teaching each subject matter area. At the same time it is lacking in the unity and focus which would enable the beginner to see the work of the elementary teacher as a clearly defined whole. As a comprehensive and intelligent summary of the best of present day thought and practice, however, it has wide interest and definite value for in-service teachers, principals and others concerned with progress in the various subject areas of the elementary curriculum.

—Reviewed by DOROTHY MCGEOCH, professor of education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, N. Y.

Observing and Recording the Behavior of Young Children. *Dorothy H. Cohen and Virginia Stern.* Number 18. 1958. 85 p.

Helping Children in Oral Communication. *Alberta Munkres.* Number 19. 1959. 102 p.

Helping Children Accept Themselves and Others. *Helen L. Gillham.* Number 20. 1959. 55 p. (*Practical Suggestions for Teaching Series.* *Alice Miel, editor.* New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.)

The many teachers who have used the booklets in this Teachers College series

during the past 20 years will welcome the addition of three new titles to the series. Each of them follows the pattern of former booklets, in such aspects as readability, actual descriptions of classroom situations, and specific helps for teachers.

In *Observing and Recording the Behavior of Young Children*, the authors stress the importance of gathering clues to help in understanding children. We get such clues, they say, "by learning to see children as they are, and especially as they see themselves." The booklet gives many very real helps both for seeing the clues in children's behavior and for putting them into usable records. While the examples and the emphasis are on young children, the basic principles and suggestions are invaluable for teachers of children at any age. This booklet seems to have real possibilities as the focus of an in-service group of teachers who want to revitalize their dealings with children in a meaningful way. This publication certainly is a useful tool for preservice teachers who are just beginning to see children in classroom situations.

"*Helping Children in Oral Communication*," says Alberta Munkres in her preface, "comes as an aid in the total teaching program, not as an extra to be added to an already overcrowded schedule. It will be at home wherever talking is used as communication and becoming refined through the process of honest evaluation and intelligent practice." What teacher of language arts (and all teachers are that!) would not welcome new ideas for teaching the skills of oral communication in a way that is not artificial and stilted? In this booklet one may find chapters on "Conversing and Discussing," "Storytelling," "Reporting and Making Speeches," "Dramatizing," and "Using Words Well." The chapters are

full of real children and real teachers, and "the examples of talking, captured by tape recorders and the stenographer's pencil, have not been polished to perfection but allowed to remain childlike, . . . and thus show the kind of talking that may be expected in any classroom." Although no separate bibliography is included, there are frequent footnote references for additional help.

Helping Children Accept Themselves and Others is a book for classroom teachers. The author believes that in spite of (or perhaps because of) the heavy load which teachers carry, they must still feel a responsibility "for helping children build a healthy view of themselves and of other people." She gives guidance to teachers, in this booklet, by describing many classroom situations in which teachers consciously assume this responsibility. At the close of each episode, the author analyzes it in a one- or two-paragraph section called "Looking beneath the surface." The episodes are grouped into three main concerns: acceptance of self, acceptance of others, acceptance of behavior. Surely this booklet is a real contribution to the teacher's professional library, for it speaks in the language of the teacher; at the same time, it deals with the area of mental health, which is certainly a primary concern of all teachers in these tension-ridden days.

All three of these booklets belong in the professional libraries of today's schools. They should be widely used by principals and supervisors in working for improved school practices, and by teachers individually and in groups as they seek new inspiration for their teaching tasks.

—Reviewed by ELIZABETH Z. HOWARD,
instructor in education, University of
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