

# Significant Books

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**Children's Views of Themselves.** *Ira J. Gordon.* 36 p. 75¢.

**How Good Is Our Kindergarten?** *Lorraine Sherer and Special Committee on Kindergarten.* 35 p. 75¢.

**Equipment and Supplies: Tested and Approved for Pre-School, School, Home.** *Committee on Equipment and Supplies.* 93 p. \$1.50. Washington, D. C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., 1959.

Readers of *Educational Leadership* need no introduction to pamphlets prepared by ACEI. For many years these pamphlets have helped teachers and parents, and the appearance of new titles on the list is eagerly anticipated. Just at the close of 1959 three new ones appeared. These three differ quite markedly from one another in every way except in the high quality level which users of ACEI materials have learned to expect.

*Children's Views of Themselves* follows the familiar procedure of using many examples of real children in introducing the subject. This is followed by a scholarly (yet most readable) discussion of the way in which children form their self-concepts. The third chapter suggests ways in which adults can estimate children's self-concepts: "Behavior can be viewed as language. It is a way a child has of telling us what's on his mind, what is important to him and what's bothering

him" (p.17). Finally, the pamphlet concludes with some things that adults can do in dealing with children appropriately, with regard for the self-concepts which children reveal to us. This final chapter should be a helpful one for teachers, even though it does not use the "cookbook" approach, or the tendency to apply recipes. Instead, it emphasizes the teacher's own self-understanding, the need for realistic expectations and opportunities for creativity, and the function of "discipline" in the total classroom situation.

In these days of great pressure to improve education, to raise the standards and quality of achievement, and to do creative jobs in school, we need books of this kind to strengthen our insights into the learners. We are convinced, many of us, that the way a child views both himself and his world determines in large measure the interpretations he will place on his experiences. We must, then, plan our learning activities in a way that takes into account these images. As Gladys Gardner Jenkins says in the foreword of this pamphlet, "We know that a child's picture of himself may color all his relationships in the classroom and his very ability to learn that which we want to teach." Let us then, as teachers, give our attention to this aspect of teaching and learning. *Children's Views of Themselves* can be an excellent starting

point for this kind of thinking about children and teaching.

*How Good Is Our Kindergarten?* was prepared by a Special Committee on Kindergarten, in response to the questions which are being asked all over the country by school people and parents alike. "We believe," says the committee, "that our greatest service is to set guide lines for the education of five-year-olds. These guide lines describe good kindergartens, whose practices check with research pertaining to the growth, development and welfare of young children."

In its 35 pages, this pamphlet does an amazing job of treating most of the important considerations related to kindergarten: what it is, who goes to kindergarten, the need for "induction" of children into kindergarten, the components of a good program, equipment and materials, etc. Much of the content is given in the form of pertinent questions:

How much individual and group guidance do five-year-olds require?

Are children encouraged to ask questions, to seek answers, to observe, to discover, to test?

Are children helped to become familiar with things they are likely to be afraid of?

Does the kindergarten teacher have the opportunity of being a good kindergarten teacher?

Some of these questions are answered by giving examples of good procedure, or by discussions of the related research findings; others are not really answered at all, but are simply raised as guide lines for what a good kindergarten *should* be.

ACEI has long been in the forefront of the struggle for recognition of kindergarten's important place in the total educational scheme. This booklet should serve as an instrument for promoting

such recognition, for convincing school boards and other community groups that kindergarten is indeed important. It should be helpful also to parents who want to know more about the *raison d'être* of kindergarten and its role in the education of their children. And most of all, it may well serve as an evaluation instrument and a rich source of suggestions for kindergarten teachers, themselves, as they seek to do a more effective job in their own classrooms.

*Equipment and Supplies* is a valuable resource for elementary schools. ACEI has set up test centers in eight cities of the United States and Canada. At these centers the offerings of the various manufacturers and dealers are tested in use with children and against specific criteria. Manufacturers have been known to change some of their products, as a result of suggestions made by the personnel of these test centers. This bulletin, then, is the 1959 Revision of the ACEI list of equipment and supplies which have been thus tested and approved.

The bulletin has four general sections: (a) Suggested equipment and supplies for a nursery school, a kindergarten, a primary classroom, and an intermediate classroom; (b) Classified lists of approved equipment and supplies, including the name of the manufacturer or distributor of each item and the age level for which it is most appropriate; (c) A section of illustrated commercial advertisements; and (d) A directory of manufacturers and distributors. Surely such a bulletin should be a *must* in any elementary school that has a budget (however limited) for the purchase of instructional supplies.

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

**Individualizing Your Reading Program.** *Jeannette Veatch.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1959. 242 p.

Returning from an observational experience, a young beginning teacher noted that the teaching of arithmetic, music, and art had changed, but that reading was taught in the same way she had been taught. Her query, which is echoed by many experienced teachers who question ability-group methods, was "Haven't we learned anything *new* about teaching reading?"

Miss Veatch says, "We have indeed. It is a pattern which fits a reading program to the exact needs of pupils. It individualizes reading." (Preface, p. xii.)

The book describes an individualized approach to reading in which children choose their own materials from a wide variety of children's books, read at their own rate, and are taught skills as they need them. It tells of a *daily instructional* program, in which the role of the teacher is a constantly active one. She helps children individually, in small groups or the total group, as needs arise. The author, in Part I, and the other educators whose articles are included in Part II of this book, see individualized reading as helping meet individual differences.

Valuable information is provided for those who are seeking answers as to the merits of such a program, ways to begin and what materials to secure. Real concern, says Miss Veatch, is expressed by teachers as they start the program, for there are no manuals or carefully outlined techniques to follow. It is fascinating to note how creative teachers have found ways to do the job, how satisfying it was for them and for children, and how unsteretyped are the records, how rich the reading, and how satisfactory the results.

For those interested in attempting an individualized approach, there are articles to help administrators initiate such a program. There is evidence that the program is helpful for slow readers as well as for accelerated readers, and book lists aid in the selection of materials.

Nancy Larrick's research has shown that children's interests change as society changes. Current children's literature attempts to keep up with social changes, and as children choose materials from this broad literary field there is little of the limitation and restriction that often occur when only texts are used for basic reading instruction.

What happens to children in the individualized reading program is, of course, of primary concern to teachers. Some articles in the book are specifically designed to help teachers at all grade levels in the elementary school. The author and others are delighted with the renewed interest in reading, the breadth of reading, and the amazing way individualized reading leads to exploration, discovery and reading in all content fields. Results indicate that children improve in their ability to do critical thinking, become more creative, and develop a positive attitude toward research. Above all, there is agreement that children read more outside the reading class itself and become convinced that books are wonderful things.

Basic research is needed to really evaluate the results of an individualized reading program. Action research currently being advocated, however, offers enough evidence to educators to enable them to begin such a program and help children and books meet happily and with success.

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