

Significant Books

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The General Education Class in the Secondary School. *Louise E. Hock and Thomas J. Hill.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960. 232 p.

The emphasis in this volume is on accounts of present practice in general education programs in American high schools. The general education class is defined by Hock and Hill as "that block of time in the school day in which those needs, problems, and concerns of our adolescents and our society that are common to all individuals are directly dealt with through a process of co-operative pupil-teacher planning without regard to the usual subject-discipline lines." The purpose of this class: the maximum development of each young person as an intelligent individual in his own right and as a mature citizen in his relationships with his fellow man.

The authors, both veterans of teaching core classes in high schools, have chosen to present very ably the case for such classes. They devote the first fourth of this volume to definition, philosophical bases, and a description of core classes in four school situations: P. K. Yonge Laboratory School, Gainesville, Florida; Evanston Township High School, Illinois; Pennsbury Junior High School, Pennsylvania; and the University School, Ohio State University. A statement of philosophy, an outline of organization, and a

typical unit are summarized for each situation. It is convenient to have these well-known programs combined in one chapter for ready reference.

The longest and most important segment of this book is that devoted to teaching in the general education class. Here are found previously unpublished examples from actual practice of effective ways to get started, to use a problem-solving approach, to meet the challenge of individual differences, to develop skills, values and attitudes, and to evaluate growth and progress. Some of these accounts have great interest in themselves. The reader is a bit disappointed when the cut-off point is reached: he would like to know what happened next.

Of value to prospective teachers of core classes are the practical descriptions of ways used by successful teachers to get the class started—developing acquaintance, establishing a friendly atmosphere, sharing, getting down to work, discovering abilities, needs, and interests, identifying problems for study. Two of the most helpful chapters concern problem-solving techniques and ways of meeting individual differences. These two chapters are packed with fresh examples. The vast range of abilities, interests, and needs of a tenth grade class of 36 is vividly shown by the sample class profile included.

In similar fashion the topics of educa-



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tional outcomes and pupil evaluation are analyzed and illustrated by meaty examples.

The final brief section of the volume deals with the future of general education, spelling out implications for teacher education, for curriculum change, and for further expansion of the general education program. The authors point out that this pattern of curriculum design has made definite progress in the past 25 years, with most current core classes clustered in the seventh and eighth grades.

A rather scanty section on research summarizes only studies which support general education—and only those sections of those studies which favor the general education pattern. For instance, the Kelley-Beatty study does show, as Hock and Hill point out, that “through the use of standardized tests . . . general education pupils demonstrated achieve-

ment superior to nongeneral education pupils in the areas of language, reading, and arithmetic.” But this same study is reported by Alberty in the 1960 *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* as revealing that the control (nongeneral education) group made greater gains in the area of study skills.

The authors conclude with a persuasive passage which underlines the perils and challenges of these times. For them “the focus of the future must inevitably be upon the general education of our people.” They predict that specialization will be postponed to post-secondary years; that the content of the secondary curriculum will be more meaningful in terms of current needs and pressures; that education will make more effective use of many disciplines to help people gain wisdom, skills, attitudes, and appreciations needed to attain the goals of democracy and peace; that we are moving toward a greater synthesis of knowledge; that the real revolution in American education is still to come; and that the ideas, if not the class organization, described and expressed in this volume will help to point directions for changes.

A useful bibliography is appended, with about one-third of the references to publications of the past five years.

This book is a workmanlike summation of ideas and beliefs concerning the general education class in high school today. The how-to-do-it section has good ideas for prospective core teachers as well as for seasoned teachers in search of suggestions for ways to improve their work with boys and girls. And the volume will provide the curriculum worker with some succinct facts and concepts with which to resist some of the current pressures to overload the school program with gadgets or with math, science, and foreign languages.

In a word, this is a useful popular treatment of a significant curriculum trend.

—Reviewed by MARGARET WASSON,
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Texas.

The Teaching of Reading. John J. De-
Boer and Martha Dallman. New
York: Henry Holt and Company, 1960.
356 p.

The closing paragraph of this new volume by authors well known in education poses clearly the task of education in relation to reading:

We are a reading nation, despite radio, television, and movies, and the schools must receive chief credit for having made this so. But literacy is not enough. Perhaps the greatest of our tasks is the development of taste and discrimination, not only in the selection of reading materials, but also in the evaluation of what is read. Never before has

popular enlightenment been so essential to the welfare of both our own country and our world. Teachers of reading thus have the twofold task of raising the cultural level of a people and of creating the widespread understanding needed to make that culture viable in an age of unexampled peril. To accomplish this task they must themselves be well-read, critically minded participants in the social scene. (p. 356)

Educators will agree heartily. How have the authors implemented this challenge? They have presented the values of reading in our day, summarized efforts to improve reading through the years, suggested the nature of individual differences and the complexity of the reading process. Classrooms of various grade levels which utilize different ways of helping children to learn to read are described. Many chapters are devoted to the details of skill development. These offer help to the teacher and will be a guide to the development of skills.

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Many readers will respond with satisfaction to the detailed discussions of reading readiness, of prereading and beginning reading experiences, of the use of basal readers, workbooks, etc. Others will be relieved to know of the stress placed on phonetic analysis as an approach to word recognition. Those seeking help for retarded readers will respond to the full suggestions incorporated in various sections. For administrators particularly interested in inaugurating a school-wide reading program there are well organized ideas. The role of the school library and hints as to its organization are timely. Bibliographies, lists of award books, periodicals for children and youth, and suggestions for organizing a book fair, etc., are added helps.

What is the over-all organization through which these ideas circulate? Designed for those in elementary education, this volume has three parts: Part I

general introduction, place of reading, development of the child; Part II, "specific reading abilities that need to be cultivated in school"; and Part III, "draws together the specific elements in reading instruction and shows how they function in the program as a whole." Part II is divided in such a way that in chapters marked "A" skills are discussed and in those marked "B" teaching aids for development of these skills are suggested.

This latter feature, the table of contents and the index make it possible to use this book as a ready reference. Its strengths lie in the organization and in the bringing together of information of historical importance and of current trends as well as in offering concrete helps for almost any aspect of the reading process. The authors reveal their practical experience with children, with various types of schools and are clear in their presentation of ideas.

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While one acknowledges these practical aspects of the presentation, this reviewer wishes that the ringing challenge stated so well above had led the authors to discuss reading from a much broader viewpoint. The demands on education these days are for more than maintaining what we have accomplished. We are called upon to devise and create new and better ways, to activate theories long accepted yet never really put into practice on a large scale, and to accept findings in research not labeled "reading." For instance, in discussing the nature of reading, the knowledge regarding perception (Allport, Combs, Mooney, etc.) needs to be interpreted for teachers of reading. What is the relationship to reading of the knowledge that we each see concrete objects in different ways? That we interpret situations and experiences in ways unique to the individual? What meanings are brought to the printed page by deprived children, those with top-notch ability in the language area and those who are able in other areas than language-reading?

In discussing retarded readers, reference is made to children reading above or below grade level and "average for their age group." The vital consideration here is a matter of the subjects' intellectual capacity. Every normal class of children has a wide spread of abilities, as recognized by the authors, hence "grade level" or "average" is *not* a functional idea, but the individual's capacity and how nearly he is reaching it *is*.

This reviewer misses extended discussion of newer approaches, including the work of Willard Olson at the University of Michigan in "self-selection," that of Alvina Treut Burrows, New York University, and R. Van Allen of San Diego County Schools in helping children through their own writing to learn

to read the printed word, of the New York City Schools in recent research on vocabulary in various series of readers and in the individualizing of reading.

The broad approach promulgated in the Claremont College Reading Conferences is mentioned yet not accepted as practical. However, these ideas have been widely accepted for many years and the practices of hundreds of teachers have improved as a result.

Some definitions of reading, however, are perhaps too broad. The Claremont College (California) conferences on reading include all perceptive observation of the real world around us. In this sense, reading becomes synonymous with education itself. While such a definition is justifiable if its terms are made sufficiently explicit, we must admit that most people today do not attach similar connotation to the word "reading." In this book we shall think of reading as an activity which involves the comprehension and interpretation of ideas symbolized by written or printed language. (p. 19)

It is, of course, the privilege of authors to define their own purposes, yet from Dr. DeBoer and Dr. Dallman one has come to expect support for sound ideas whether "most people" at the moment accept them or not. We look to them to lead teachers on to new ventures and to inventive approaches to teaching based on theories long accepted—for instance, "self-selection" as a principle of learning. Here we need the thoughts of such scholars as these authors to enable us to formulate effective practices.

In the preface the authors state that one of their purposes is "to encourage experimentation." This purpose is not accomplished to the degree that one would hope. What appears to be a rather limited approach to reading readiness and prereading experiences lessens the opportunity for helping children to ap-

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proach print through their own writing and a continued individualized approach. The use of series of readers as suggested leaves much to be desired when one considers the limitations of vocabulary in the primary books of most series and the large vocabulary which many children understand and use in speaking and with little trouble come to recognize in print. What of the many children who need only a few hints regarding phonetic and structural analysis to be able to move quickly into independence in word recognition? Extended instruction in word analysis appears to be unnecessary for many learners. This is closely related to

the use of workbooks which, if they are to serve functionally, should be used with the greatest discrimination. How much more effective it is to encourage children to continue to read or to write when working independently of the teacher, rather than to do repetitive and often stereotyped "seatwork"!

In an era of education which supports programs for the gifted, the mentally retarded, the deaf, the visually and neurologically handicapped, etc.—that is, supports the idea of individual differences almost to the *n*th degree—there is dire need for more definitive professional material on individualizing in relation to all learning.

Particularly helpful and appreciated will be the sections on analyzing and cultivating children's interests (Chapters 11A and 11B). The great variety of exposures children are subject to in the mass media of communication is recognized. Teachers and parents will respond favorably to the presentation here. The role of parents in creating a setting for success in reading is analyzed in a most helpful manner (p. 345).

In the section "The Reading Program in Action" (primary and intermediate grades), every teacher will find encouragement as he seeks to improve planning for his class which will lead to satisfactions in reading for all learners. Especially suggestive is the discussion of problems of reading in various curriculum areas. References at the close of each chapter are worth pursuing as some of the newest material is included (Lazar Miel, Veatch, etc.).

The reviewer urges that the many admirers of the authors read the book and make their own analysis of its values.

—Reviewed by MARIAN JENKINS, Consultant in Elementary Education, Los Angeles County Schools, California.

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