



## **SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL: TO WHAT ENDS?**

**LESLEE J. BISHOP**

A RATIONALE is needed for high school education and for the youth in our society. The assorted statements of goals, purposes and tasks prevalent today do not constitute such a rationale; nor do the diverse views of those currently insisting on innovation form a coherent mandate for program or for change. Further evidence of turbulence is seen in the administrative restructuring and the organizational juggling that seek to effect change through a reordering of the institutional components, rather than through a rethinking of the basic purposes and related means.

As a consequence of the immensity and complexity of the task of integrating the desired ends and procedures, we have resorted to the expedient of falling back upon the separate and the manageable:

In a shrinking world, social sensitivity and cultural understanding are essential . . .

Knowledge of a foreign language is essential to an understanding of the structure of one's own language and to communication . . .

As the demands of our society become more precise, a higher level of understanding of basic mathematical concepts is required . . .

The school has the same obligation to the youth for whom work represents the next step as to the youth for whom college . . .

Effective living requires an understanding of the roles and structure of our language along with its literary contribution to individual development . . .

An understanding of scientific methods and principles becomes essential to intelligent decision making . . .

The nuances of color, sound and line illuminate the personal resources and perceptions as well as capture the more objective . . .

But to be skilled enough to contribute to the essential business functions of any enterprise is a critical form of citizenship compatible with the American concept of work . . .

Cultural continuity resides not only in books and works of art, but also in media not yet recognized . . .

This physical or vocal interpretation can yield pleasure to the performer as well as the viewer when it has quality and meaning. . . .

## **A Beginning**

However important these representative fragments from various content areas may be, they illustrate the dilemma of the curriculum worker or the administrator. Significantly the end—or the beginning—cannot be found in this domain; it resides in each learner. The task of the school is to help each individual develop a concept of and a role for self, and to facilitate a continuing enculturation; it is to enable each learner to make individual sense out of the universe of stimuli.

The expanded imperatives for education and the greater accessibility of the environment through new resources, methods and media, make tenable a concern and a program for each individual. The task is incredibly complex, or humanely simple. Complex, if we must program every idea, time interval, learning increment and institutional verity. Simple, if we can learn to understand and respect each learner, and make possible a relevant curriculum and particularized guidance. Required is as much regard for the integrity and worth of each individual's inner space as for the dimensions and physics of outer space. In many respects the school represents the last bastion for individual confrontation, personal interaction and value appraisal.

What is needed is a less institutionalized and a more humane environment; a more personalized curriculum and individualized learning situation; concern for relevance in terms of pupils as well as of social, intellectual and national needs.

Relevance includes a dialogue with pupils in terms of their concerns. Relevance also involves elements currently being defined by research and experimentation; in terms of experiences, modes, methods, and skills of inquiry and problem solving; thinking, valuing, generalizing, computing, communicating, responding, creating. The developed skills, the memory of the experience, the competence in the method—these have durability, transferability, and, hopefully, a generative quality. "The Senior High School: To What Ends?" Not to an end at all, but to a beginning and a continuing.

—LESLEE J. BISHOP, *Executive Secretary, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.*

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