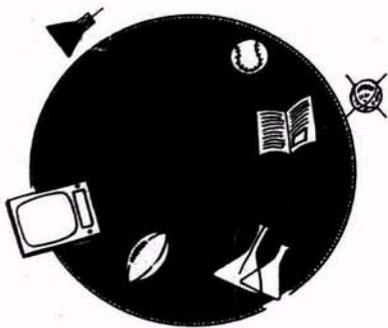


THE ADOLESCENT AND HIS TIME



WANDA B. MITCHELL

Chairman, Speech Arts Department

Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois

THIS is an age of computer registration numbers, area code telephone numbers, and dial-a-tape French lessons. Small wonder that a youth described one phase of his new life in an Army barracks as "wall-to-wall brothers." Students are herded into massive lecture halls and catalogued according to the "normal distribution" curve.

Today's educational programs sometimes make it easier for a student to master calculus in high school than to discover himself and maintain his individual identity. What chance is there for dreams, for identifying one's self, for thinking through the purpose of one's life, for introspection? Most capable students would find it easier to answer a question on intercontinental missiles than the one presented to *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*: "What is the most important thing about me?"

This discovery of self is one of the essentials of total education. Henry Ward Beecher described education as "the knowledge of how to use the whole of one's self. Many men use one or two faculties out of the score with which they are endowed. A man is educated who knows how to make a tool of every faculty—how to open it, how to keep it sharp, and how to apply it to all practical purposes." A curriculum which makes no provision for the discovery of self is inadequate in preparing youth for meaningful existence.

How can the curriculum provide opportunities for self-discovery? One way is suggested by UN Ambassador Arthur Goldberg in a *New York Times* article while he was Secretary of Labor:

In a complex, modern society like our own, art of all kinds is called to one of the essential services of freedom—to free man from the mass. Art, whether on the stage, in a gallery, or in a concert hall—asserts the supremacy of the individual. The insight of the artist leads to cultural discovery for all of the people.

It is no happenstance that the government is now supporting creative and performing arts centers throughout the country. Such activities are following the

recommendations of the White House Conference on Children and Youth that "more emphasis be placed on cultural activities to provide children with creative outlets and increase their appreciation of beauty and their interest in the arts." Such activities provide for individual expression for "the world of the artist is supremely the world of the individual."

Arts and the Self

Sydney Harris, Chicago *Daily News* columnist, writes:

What is immensely appealing, in a deep human sense, about the arts is that they remain one of the few areas in which true individualism can flourish; in which the creator and performer is a person directly communicating with other persons; in which his ancestors, language, connections, and superficial traits are totally subordinated to his professional skill.

Mr. Harris warns us of the dangers to society when this "creative urge goes sour," when a youngster's creative energy is not channeled in satisfying and productive ways.

It is often the brightest and most potentially talented slum youngsters who become the leaders in gang violence; they are the little Napoleons who do not know what to do with their gifts except devise ways to retaliate against the social order. Some of them, of course, are psychopathic personalities; but many are what Lindner rightly calls "rebels without a cause."

A realistic curriculum provides such rebels with a cause through activities such as art, music and drama. Rita Criste, director of the Children's Theater of Evanston (Illinois) describes the magic experience of seeing James Barrie's *Peter Pan* as

... all alive with sound and color and movement. [It] gives each child an impression of beauty and wonder which will last not for one day but for a lifetime. . . . By repetition of certain themes through the theater we work toward understanding, compassion and responsibility. To what end do we develop matters technologically without a balance of maturity in matters moral and ethical?

Such creative experiences are equally necessary for the total development of the teen-ager described by Mardell Ogilvie in *Teaching Speech in the High School*:

High school students are complex individuals—awkward, emotionally unstable, anxious for approval of their peers, longing for independence from their families, and wanting solutions to moral, philosophical, and religious problems. Much of the time they secretly play roles. They walk, talk, dress, and act like those they idolize. They identify themselves both with real people, and with people in books. Because of their complexity and their desire to play roles, creative drama serves a real need for them.

Relating to Others

Thus, the curriculum needs to provide each student with opportunities for identifying, developing and expressing his individual personality. A corollary is the need to help that individual develop satisfying relationships with others. There

are certain personal skills and human relationships necessary for successful living in a democracy that cannot be learned by writing essays, that cannot be mastered by memorization, that cannot be acquired in a science laboratory.

Young people learn to be kind only by working with other people; they learn to be tolerant only in human relationships; they learn to influence the conduct of others in a laboratory of work with other human beings whose rights are equal to, but not necessarily the same as theirs. Every personal contact within the school is part of this process. Activities such as student government, the school newspaper, traffic patrol, class parties, the senior prom, the May Day queen, the talent show, the old clothes collection are therefore an important part of the school program—not to keep students off the street, not to keep them wholesomely occupied, not to prevent them from becoming juvenile delinquents, but to equip them with skills necessary for the functioning of the democratic process.

A curriculum which provides for self-identification and satisfying relationships with others is not totally fulfilling its purpose if it makes no provision to assist the student in mastering the world of work and leisure. A realistic curriculum has the responsibility of developing not only skills and craftsmanship, but *also attitudes* toward work.

Are businessmen and industrialists justified in their criticism of the products of the public schools? In a recent article in the *Chicago Daily News*, the president of one of the nation's largest advertising agencies said:

The U.S. is going through the great era of the goof-off; the age of the half-done job. The land from coast to coast has been enjoying a stampede away from responsibility. It is populated with laundrymen who won't iron shirts, with waiters who won't serve, with carpenters who will come around some day maybe, with executives whose minds are on the golf course, with teachers who demand a single salary schedule so that achievement cannot be rewarded . . . with students who take cinch courses.

The mediocrity of salesmen is only a part of our national pattern of always being willing to settle for something less than the best.

No curriculum can progress fast enough to train students for jobs which come into existence with each technological advance, but it can and must guide them in the development of attitudes toward work and toward the increasing hours of leisure time. How adequately do the music program, the physical education department, the drama program, the book reports in English, the geography class, the modern language course prepare the student to spend his long vacations in profitable creativity, travel, reading, and refreshing physical activity?

Anyone associated with modern adolescents is aware of the pressures with which they are faced. The academic push begins early, as was depicted in a recent cartoon showing a preschool youngster whispering into Santa's ear: "Please, can you get me into Harvard?" The increasing number of emotional problems related to these and other pressures serves as a constant reminder of the need to develop a curriculum which will include opportunity for self discovery, activities for achieving satisfying human relationships, and the development of skills and attitudes for work and play.

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