

THE major goals of education tend to emphasize the development of individuals who are self-directed, who are critical learners, and who are capable of making intelligent choices. Students must be helped to develop an adaptive approach to problem solving in order to accomplish these goals.<sup>2</sup> Procedures are being formulated to focus attention upon the learner so that he may attain the necessary skills to achieve such goals. Duel,<sup>3</sup> for instance, feels that a student can accomplish such goals if he is able to develop insight and the ability to evaluate himself and his potential; and that the first step in such a process is to develop skills in self-evaluation.

Up to this time, evaluation in elementary education has been primarily concerned with the assessment of student achievement. This function of evaluation is most often carried out by teachers after instruction has occurred and apart from the learning process. Most authorities agree, however, that evaluation should be considered as an integral part of the learning process rather than something which occurs after instruction has taken place.<sup>4</sup> The role of the learner may be enhanced when such integration occurs. Improvement in learning takes place, according to Herrick, when the learner becomes aware of the goals he is striving to achieve, what he has done, what norms are used, and what judgments are reached.<sup>5</sup> The learner can act intelligently to understand and to improve his behavior when he is included in the evaluation process.

Such active involvement in evaluation is not normally provided for the learner. Russell notes that: "In the past teachers and evaluation experts have

<sup>1</sup> See: J. W. Hughes. "Self-Evaluation: Effects Upon Achievement and Retention in Spelling with Fifth-Grade Children." Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Rogers. *Client-Centered Therapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951. p. 384-91.

<sup>3</sup> Henry J. Duel. "Help Your Students Help Themselves." *National Association of Secondary-School Principals Bulletin* 43:52-54; October 1959.

<sup>4</sup> Chester Harris. *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*. Third edition. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960. p. 858.

<sup>5</sup> Virgil E. Herrick. "Selected Writings." In: Dan Anderson, James Macdonald and Frank May, editors. *Strategies of Curriculum Development*. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1965. p. 117-19.

# ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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devoted more time to evaluating pupils' achievement than they have to developing children's ability to evaluate their own growth."<sup>6</sup>

## Evaluation Emphasis in Elementary Education

A survey of classroom evaluating practices was made of 300 elementary teachers from kindergarten through grade six.<sup>7</sup> Results of the survey showed that arithmetic was the subject most frequently tested, spelling was second, science third, language fourth, music and physical education tied for fifth place, with social studies and art seldom, if ever, tested. Specific evaluation practices utilized in some of the classrooms visited in the survey illustrate Russell's observation concerning overemphasis on the evaluation of academic achievement.

*Arithmetic.* The high frequency of testing arithmetic in the elementary grades is due (a) partly to the importance placed upon mastery by pupils of certain prerequisites essential to further progress, and (b) the ease with which paper-and-pencil tests can be constructed.<sup>8</sup> However, as one examines evaluation procedures which are encouraged for use in this subject area, one finds little, if any, involvement of the learner in the evaluation process.

Techniques used generally relate to pupil achievement and can be grouped into three major classifications: (a) teacher observation of pupil-work, (b) special text and teacher-made test exercises, and (c) standardized tests. Little emphasis is placed upon the learner's role in the evaluation process. Texts elaborate upon ways in which the teacher can make observations of pupils' work, and make judgments based on pupils' efforts.<sup>9</sup> However, little or no effort is made to include the learner in these crucial roles involved in the total evaluation process.

<sup>6</sup> David H. Russell. "What Does Research Say About Self-Evaluation." *Journal of Educational Research* 46:561-73; April 1953.

<sup>7</sup> J. D. McAulay. "Evaluation in the Social Studies of the Elementary School." *Social Studies* 52:203-205; November 1961.

<sup>8</sup> Herbert Spitzer. *The Teaching of Arithmetic*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961. p. 282.

<sup>9</sup> L. J. Adams and Wilbur Dutton. *Arithmetic for Teachers*. Englewood Cliffs. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963. p. 354-65.

*Social Studies.* Unit teaching, often associated with elementary social studies instruction, contains excellent possibilities for involving the learner realistically in the evaluation process. Unit teaching is a way of working with pupils so that they share in planning and in the carrying out of activities. It is a problem-solving approach to learning in which pupils and teacher are jointly involved.<sup>10</sup> Such joint planning between teacher and pupils allows children to develop a clear understanding of the objectives of the unit, and also to plan activities which will lead to the development of these objectives.

The educational experiences inherent in this type of teaching are excellent for placing the learner in a position to evaluate his own efforts, as well as to understand the evaluation made by others related to his achievement. However, the degree to which teachers take advantage of these inherent opportunities related to evaluation in unit teaching is not clear. Major focus in evaluation of the social studies, as in arithmetic, appears to be placed upon the teacher's role in making observations and judgments of pupil achievement.

*Spelling.* In an effort to maintain continuity and consistency in a spelling program, educators have derived systematic plans of study which teachers may follow in a classroom. One approach to this is known as the teach-study-test method.<sup>11</sup> In this procedure, the entire class is taught one list of words each week. Initial instruction concentrates upon word meaning and pronunciation, followed by various writing exercises containing the words to be spelled. Periodic tests are made to determine progress. Difficulties are usually determined after the trial test, and a final test is used at the end of the week for evaluation of word mastery. Testing procedures in this method are more apt to follow teacher-directed lines rather than inclusion of the learner in any phase of the evaluation process other than taking the test and receiving the grade placed on the paper by either the teacher or by another pupil.

Spelling instruction sometimes follows a different pattern called the test-study method.<sup>12</sup> This method seeks to save an individual's time by making it unnecessary for him to study words he already knows. Such words are eliminated at the beginning of the week by a pre-test of the week's word list. The student then concentrates on the specific words which were misspelled on the pre-test.

Although the test-study method helps to focus attention on specific needs of a student at the onset of instruction, testing procedures utilized by many teachers exclude the student from active involvement in the evaluation process. This exclusion of the learner minimizes the inherent possibilities for student self-evaluation in the test-study procedures. As in other elementary subjects, the focus of evaluation in spelling is upon achievement, and little attempt is made by teachers to develop students' ability to evaluate their own growth.

In summary, with an increasing national emphasis being placed upon the

<sup>10</sup> Margaret G. McKim, Carl W. Hansen, William L. Carter. *Learning To Teach in the Elementary School*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959. p. 326-27.

<sup>11</sup> Edward Dolch. *Better Spelling*. Champaign, Illinois: Garrard Publishing Co., 1942. p. 174.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

pursuit of educational goals which stress self-direction, it behooves educators to be more alert to maximizing the educational potentiality of all instructional techniques which might reinforce positive goals of self-direction. Skills of self-evaluation have been suggested as an initial step for promoting such goals.

Herrick<sup>13</sup> suggests that educators should consider more imaginative ways to involve the learner in all roles played in the evaluation process. Such major roles include:

1. Doer—person whose behavior is being evaluated
2. Observer—person who looks at what the learner is doing
3. Judger—person who appraises what the learner has done
4. Actor—person who acts on the results of the evaluation.

In most educational settings, the learner is "the doer," while the teacher plays the roles of "the observer" and "the judger." The learner is then expected to be the "actor," based upon the assumptions made by the teacher's observations and judgments. If the evaluation process is to become an integral part of the learning process, then it is necessary that one should study how the learner can have an opportunity to play an important role in all phases of the evaluation process. The effect of such involvement on academic achievement needs to be considered as a possible step towards maximizing the efficiency of the learning process. 5

<sup>13</sup> Herrick. *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

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