

Correspondent: John S. Hand

### "Blocks to Change": A Reply

Indianapolis, Indiana

Dear Editor:

Professor Russell W. Wiley's article, "Blocks to Change," in the January 1970 *Educational Leadership*,<sup>1</sup> leaves me frustrated and irritable. At this point in education, it seems somewhat gratuitous to present still another thumbnail analysis of why change is difficult to achieve. It is even more gratuitous to set forth guidelines that do not guide but offer, instead, a further, although somewhat backhanded, analysis of the problem.

Professor Wiley's first guideline suggests that commitment will ensure that that which now exists in terms of human deprivations will cease to exist. Such an assumption is, at best, naive. Commitment to human values, regardless of how often it has failed to be practiced in the classroom or in school administration, is almost synonymous with education. That deprivations do exist in spite of generations of commitment and good will should tell us quite clearly that a guideline of this sort lacks the specification for procedure that will, in fact, guide us into actions suitable to solve the problems noted. Just what must be done to eliminate "acts of separatism, anti-intellectualism, and extremism . . . within the operational policies and pro-

cedures of [the] school systems"? What must be done to translate commitment into effective action?

Guideline number two discusses five areas of concern (planning, evaluation, management, staffing, and scheduling) as if some very real antecedent considerations with which school administrators must wrestle every day are either nonexistent or unimportant. For instance, Professor Wiley's recommendation on planning assumes the existence of funds which are not currently available to most school systems. I willingly grant that such funds should be available, but, until they are, this guideline cannot be implemented in any degree sufficient to satisfy Professor Wiley's implied expectation.

In a somewhat similar vein, years of conscientious in-service education efforts by a number of school systems have not resulted in school personnel who "know and apply the findings of current educational research" (Item 2b. in the guidelines). The dilemma for curriculum workers at this point is that we do not know how to do what Professor Wiley says should be a guideline for our behavior; we are still groping for the key of how even to begin to do on a limited scale what Professor Wiley says we must be certain to do for all school personnel.

If Professor Wiley has a formula which will result in school personnel knowing and applying the findings of current educational

<sup>1</sup> Russell W. Wiley. "Blocks to Change." *Educational Leadership* 27 (4): 351-53; January 1970.

research, he will receive the plaudits of a host of curriculum workers. But, if he does not have a remedy for our ailment, it is somewhat cynical of him to tell us not to be ill.

Professor Wiley's guidelines in regard to management, staffing, and scheduling are well taken. They imply, once more, the need to find ways to make teaching sufficiently rewarding that master teachers will not be lured away from the classroom by the higher pay and status of the administrative desk. They also imply the need to rethink the premises upon which the mechanics of school operation are based, so that educational objectives will determine the mechanics. (It is about time for teachers and students to have priority over janitors and administrators in determining such things as scheduling and the use of facilities.)

One other weakness of guideline two, and of guidelines three and four as well, is that the whole area of community expectations and community relations is ignored. The three forces noted by Professor Wiley—separatism, anti-intellectualism, and extremism—operate even more virulently within the communities surrounding the

schools than in the schools themselves. Ignoring the community relations aspect of curriculum work, particularly if change is accepted as a reasonable mandate for responsible educators, is an open invitation to failure. Even the best of programs (and most innovations fall short of being "the best" precisely because they are new and relatively untried) cannot succeed if within the community the doubts, fears, and antagonisms toward the program are not in a large measure allayed. A continuous progress curriculum, for instance, will not succeed if parents believe that "basics" whatever that may be) are being neglected. The facts in such a case are actually unimportant since the community will act upon what it believes about the program. Thus, building and maintaining rapport (synonym—trust) with community is a *sine qua non* for improving curriculum and instructional practice. Guidelines for action to foster change cannot safely ignore this.

JOHN S. HAND

Assistant Director, Division of Curriculum,  
Office of the State Superintendent of Public  
Instruction

## Hunters Point Redeveloped

### A Sixth-Grade Venture

- During the taut and tense days immediately following San Francisco's first racial riot in October 1966, one classroom teacher, William Edison of Sheridan School, channeled the energies and frustrations of his sixth-grade students into an exciting social studies project. They undertook to plan the complete redevelopment of one of the city's depressed areas, Hunters Point.
- This unusual booklet includes a verbatim tape transcription of the students' presentation of their plans to a class in elementary education at San Francisco State College.
- Introductory statements are by FRED T. WILHELMS, ASCD Executive Secretary—"A Fresh Breath of Reality"; MARGARET BURK LAGRILLE, Professor of Education—"Hunters Point Redeveloped" and Teacher Education"; and WILLIAM EDISON, Classroom Teacher—"A Class for All Seasons."
- The booklet is illustrated and features a full-color facsimile of the children's mural showing Hunters Point "redeveloped."

68 pages

NEA Stock Number: 611-17348

\$2.00

ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT  
1201 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

Copyright © 1970 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.