

## **SELECTED FOR REVIEW**

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**Teaching Ethnic Studies.** James A. Banks, editor. *43rd Yearbook of the National Council for the Social Studies.* Washington, D.C.: the Council, 1973. 297 pp.

—Reviewed by JOHN A. SAVAGE, Los Angeles, California.

This book is primarily about ethnic minorities: Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans, Asian Americans; but James Banks has made it a point to be as inclusive as possible and practicable. For example, not only does he include a chapter on the large, until recently neglected Puerto Rican population, but he also sees to it that women and White ethnic groups are represented. While there is no attempt to meld these groups together, an opening section deals generally enough with the concepts of racism, cultural pluralism, and social justice to prepare the reader for the subsequent chapters on the educational problems, needs, goals, and values of each minority group.

A hard-hitting opening chapter by Mildred Dickeman provides a lucid anthropological analysis of racism in our schools

and argues the need to teach cultural pluralism by being culturally plural. There are several outstanding chapters in the book, although to ask for the consistent quality of Dickeman's contribution would be audacious. It will be enough to say here that several of the chapters—in fact, several of the poignant, sad, happy, hopeful photos which are included—deserve reviews of their own.

The book makes three major contributions to the field of ethnic studies: it presents knowledge of ethnic groups; it argues for—and will effect in the reader—important changes in personal values; and it suggests some clear directions for changing schools' structures, curricula, instruction, and even many of their operating premises. Through interstitial "Suggested Teaching Strategies," the book makes concrete suggestions for approaching concepts and content in teaching ethnic studies to members of both majority and minority groups.

The major significance of this book is that it unites rather than divides or subdivides minority groups. The cultural pluralism of the book itself asserts that none of us

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is free until we all are. Banks himself points out that "What is legitimate, normative, and valued is subject to reconstruction in each new generation." With this book around, my hopes for positive reconstruction are lifted. □

**Crucial Issues in Education.** *Henry Ehlers, editor.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973. 336 pp.

—Reviewed by M. DONALD THOMAS, Superintendent of Schools, Salt Lake City School District, Utah.

If one chooses to read only one book during the 1973-74 school year, that book should be *Crucial Issues in Education*. The anthology does not help to solve educational problems, it makes them appear more complex. That is precisely why the book should be read—to establish that solutions for difficult problems are hard to come by. At a time when so many are "discovering" simplistic answers to complicated situations, it is reassuring to know that major writers are not being influenced by the trivia.

Reading *Crucial Issues in Education* is a tiring task. Ehlers has put together a collection of 60 position papers written by outstanding writers. The result is that each of the five chapters presents a demanding dialog among the most incisive contemporary minds in the field of education. The book in total is more than one book should be—it is more like five books under one cover. The five sections are: "Equalize Educational Opportunity," "Make Education Relevant," "Utilize Educational Technology," "Humanize the Learning Process," and "Emphasize Values."

As the authors present claims and counterclaims, conflicting values, and rival hypotheses, the reader is forced to examine his own position, his values, and his beliefs. Particularly disturbing are the presentations of Nicolaus Mills, Christopher Jencks, Ivan Illich, Marshall McLuhan and George Leonard, and Huston Smith. Picking out any other six authors would be equally disturbing to someone else. Suffice it to say that the

book is an invitation to experience some fascinating and challenging conversations over controversial issues which supersede our day-to-day school problems.

One particular gem in the volume is "Measuring Man" by Joseph Usmura. In it he argues that "measuring a man's knowledge, his progress, and his ability is known best by asking him the right questions, by listening carefully to his answers, by having him write extensively what he really thinks, by talking with him to see if he really means what he says." What a pleasant contrast to discrete behavioral objectives!

Similarly one might enjoy "Learn with Book" by R. J. Heathron or "The Linear Teacher and the Non-Linear McLuhan" by Hayden R. Smith, or Dorothy Z. Seymour's "Black Children, Black Speech." It is impossible not to find something in the collection that engages the reader in a confrontation of wits and a struggle to better understand the crucial issues in education.

Additional features of the book are these: It is available in paperback, it has an index of names, and it contains a comprehensive index of subjects. *Crucial Issues in Education* is one book that many will want to read several times to make themselves feel uncomfortable. In the process they may obtain some glimmers of truth. □

**But What Do We Do Instead? A Breakthrough in Elementary Education.** *Beecher H. Harris.* New York: Vantage Press, Inc., 1973. 165 pp.

—Reviewed by ARTHUR J. LEWIS, Professor of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville.

*But What Do We Do Instead?* is another book that portrays an alternative to existing elementary school programs. However, this is not another attack on schools as institutions—attacks that assume that effective educational institutions can only rise phoenix-like from the ashes of existing systems. In fact, Harris envisions that present systems of education should remain intact but be strengthened by major changes to

"provide a rich life for children today" (p. 33). Harris believes that the changes he advocates can only occur when the prevailing philosophy of education as *learning* is replaced with one which regards education as *living*. Efforts to change programs in the past have failed, according to Harris, because they have been made within "the same old arena," based on "the same old framework," namely a *subject-teaching* program.

Harris attempts to operate within a new arena and to build a new framework by advocating that subject-centered learning activities be replaced with "vital experiences meaningful and useful to the children at the time" (p. 33). Three types of experiences are described: central, continuing, and emergent. A *central experience* is "the main occupation of the day—an organized pursuit by the entire class of one intensive activity" (p. 47). *Continuing experiences* include sharing, planning, art activities, music activities, and reading activities. Gradually developing *emergent experiences* include activities involving numbers, health and safety, science, personal-social living, social environment, language, and special interests and hobbies. Harris offers specific proposals for changes in school administration, school organization, and parental involvement to support his "child centered" curriculum.

The reader will recognize many of the proposed changes—they have been tried before and subsequently abandoned. What is new is that Harris attempts to identify all of the interrelated changes consistent with a philosophy that views education as living. Two questions remain, however. First, could the changes Harris advocates gain the general support of educators and laymen? Second, could a school make the proposed changes through an evolutionary or gradual process, as Harris suggests? The University of Chicago Laboratory School, developed by John Dewey and his staff at the turn of the century, was similar in some respects to the one proposed by Harris. But Dewey's task was to create a school, not to change one. The school Harris envisions may have to be created—gradual modification of existing programs may not be enough. □

**Competency-Based Instruction.** *Thomas S. Nagel and Paul T. Richman.* Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1972. 98 pp.

—Reviewed by PATRICK GROFF, Professor of Education, California State University, San Diego.

This book attempts to design, as its subtitle indicates, "a strategy to eliminate failure" in schools. Its authors believe that, given enough time, 95 percent of students can master any school subject.

They contend, as well, that "by expecting a greater level of performance," the teacher gets it (p. 11). But students in CBI are "compelled to try and try again, to achieve a mastery of the subject. Certainly CBI is no sugar-coated pill—it forces all to work to the utmost of their potential" (p. 12). Yet somehow a "student can drop out without being branded a failure," and take up what he thinks are more attractive studies. This is one of the many lapses in logic of CBI.

CBI pleads with the teacher, "You should act humane [sic] in the classroom" (p. 44). This means avoid failure by giving the child an unlimited number of chances to master an objective. Unanswered here, however, are: Will slow-learning children "compelled to try and try again" be motivated to

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do so? Especially as other children turn to new and different tasks? Are there not several signals of failure, one being required to do the same task over and over? Where is the evidence that 95 percent of all children can master any school subject, in time? Cannot the standards for pass/fail in CBI be adjusted one way or the other to make pass inevitable?

In CBI the work students do must be stated as precise and observable acts of behavior called "instructional objectives." But how does the busy teacher find time to write (or select), for example, the "40,000 objectives to individualize my third grade reading program" (p. 53)? Write for help to an objectives exchange, is the authors' lame advice.

The reader who may be convinced so far about CBI is now ready for "expressive objectives" (as versus instructional objectives). The latter, we were told, are observable acts. The former, for example, "The student will listen to a recording of Brahms' Symphony No. 4" (p. 35), violate all the cardinal rules of CBI; that is, objectives are precise, measurable, and clearly stated.

Over this hump, we are now on the "plateau" of CBI, that is, astride its New Doctrine called "criterion-referenced instruction" (CRI). As with the other such Doctrines that have come and gone over the years, the CRI credo promises teachers success in their work if they will but follow its dictates. Which, outside of the need to write multitudes of finely detailed objectives, turn out to be largely a rewording of formal teaching behavior.

The trouble that arises with CBI-CRI as a doctrine about teaching comes out of the historical fact that rarely have such doctrines had much staying power. That is, while an any-means-to-an-end mentality may have calamitous political results, this apparently is not so for the teaching/learning process. The empirical evidence so far indicates that pupil achievement factors bear little statistical relationship to any *certain* teaching behavior. In short, we have yet to identify the indisputable behavioral skills a teacher must possess if students are to learn.

So, CBI may be acceptable, perhaps, by formalistic teachers not resentful of the time it takes to write its overdone and laborious instructional objectives. (Since there is no possible way of knowing what a "bad" expressive objective is, any of these will do.) One thing can be said for the past battles between doctrines of teaching and teaching as an art. The latter may lose the first few rounds. It has never lost such a fight. □

**English in Black and White. Robbins Burling.** New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973. 178 pp.

—Reviewed by EDWARD G. PONDER, Professor of Education, New York University, New York City.

This book was written in a way that can be understood by nonspecialists, promises the author, Professor Burling, and indeed he succeeds in fulfilling this promise. Few books on Black and White dialects present such clear-cut descriptions even though one might quibble with those descriptions.

The first part of the book deals with a theoretical framework for understanding linguistics and dialectology. Chapter 2 in particular is a well written account of linguistics and dialectology without the technical jargon so often used in such discussions. Tables are presented to further communicate and simplify what the author is trying to convey. Unfortunately, Professor Burling does not utilize the opportunity to forcefully dispel the notion of "correct speech" which, incidentally, is a similar weakness throughout the book. He only seems to flirt with the notion, but does not actually take a firm stand.

The author's notion that unless one reads Chapter 2, especially nonspecialists, it will not be possible to read and understand the subsequent chapters does not hold up. While this chapter does set the framework for later reading in the book, one with only a fleeting knowledge of dialectology or one who works with children who speak nonstandard dialects would be able to profit from the book. For the chapters dealing with the sociopsy-

chological aspects of language, especially attitudes, nonspecialists would find themselves on familiar home ground.

The main weakness of the book is that it contains many contradictions. For example, while the author talks about standard and nonstandard speech being divergent, he states that they have a great degree of overlap. Moreover, the author fails to distinguish Black English from nonstandard Black English and seems to use them interchangeably. In addition, he generalizes too much on northern speech versus southern speech and tends to convey that northern speech is standard speech over southern speech whether Black or White. The author also gives too much credence to Bereiter and Engelmann in affecting educators in their attempt to work with Black children in particular who speak nonstandard dialects. Caution should also be exercised in examining some of the questions that Burling presents at the end of each chapter. In general, nevertheless, this book on *English in Black and White* merits careful reading for it presents a wealth of information for students of dialectology. □

**Environmental Education in the Elementary School.** *Larry L. Sale and Ernest W. Lee.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972. 203 pp.

—Reviewed by GEORGE PRATT,\* Director, Office of Education and Manpower Planning, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C.

Instructional materials for environmental education have come to light recently in almost every state. However, in spite of the emerging array of materials, there are few teachers who are satisfied that they are using proper methods and suitable content for their students.

The relative few who do feel that they are providing sound knowledge, skills, and

\* This review was written by Dr. George Pratt in his private capacity. No official support or endorsement by the Environmental Protection Agency or any other agency of the federal government is intended or should be inferred.

values seem to be those who have worked to develop their own approach.

For those of you who have not had a grant, sabbatical, or summer institute to devise your own approach, Sale and Lee have authored a useful compendium of current methodology and subject matter. The volume makes the error of assuming that a teacher is free to redesign the existing curriculum, but this does not interfere with the authors' describing a wide range of ideas, demonstrations, and techniques.

Perhaps the most serious omission of the volume is the lack of corrective steps which can be and should be taken to clean up pollution. While the book does communicate a sense of urgency and foreboding, little is mentioned about the strict enforcement actions and positive steps which are becoming a reality. There is also little mention of the changes in a person's style of living which could reduce pollution.

It is important to set out, as this volume has, the principles of ecology and the man-earth relationships, but it is equally important to convey the steps needed to achieve environmental quality.

Considering the strong points of the book, it should be noted that knowledge the teacher should have and various comparative teaching techniques are treated in detail with appropriate references for further inquiry. For the school department considering new learning approaches, this volume would be a useful study.

For the classroom teacher who is looking for instructional blocks to use next week or next month, there are a number of investigations in the chapter on "Pollution of the Environment" which help illustrate various pollution phenomena. This compilation is not as comprehensive as others available, but for someone seeking simple demonstrations the listing has an adequate variety and is well suited to grades three through six.

The book is the first treatment by a major publisher of the various teaching approaches in use for environmental education. From that standpoint, it is an important and useful source book for an environmental educator. □

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