

Editorials

After the Fireworks

Robert R. Leeper, Editor

Now that the tall ships have departed and the lights and even the echoes of the great fireworks displays have faded away into time and distance, what remains to us of the Bicentennial Celebration? Certainly more than a vague recollection of excitement and exhilaration. What seems most likely to remain and to grow is the sense of rededication to the essential meaning of the American dream and to the ideals that have been its undergirding forces throughout the two centuries of its existence.

Such a rededication is not unimportant. We need not reiterate here the weaknesses and the sordid episodes that have characterized and still seem to be prevalent in the national, international—and even the local scene. So many incidents involving notable persons have seemed to indicate that many of our leaders are not living lives devoted to the service of their fellow human beings. Rather, they seem to be living for themselves and for the moment.

The Bicentennial, however, has apparently been tremendously successful in helping each citizen and each local community to regain the perspective of history and the sense of the greatness of unselfish service to one's fellow human beings. Perhaps this is too idealized a view. If so, may the editor be forgiven for such optimism toward the end of the nation's two hundredth birthday year? The attainment of such longevity with a record that has much that is good and admirable in it—to offset the negative and the false—is in itself an achievement that no other democratic nation can boast. So perhaps this one time even optimism can be justified.

Are there significant lessons for those of us in curriculum and supervision work growing out of the celebrations and the historical deliberations of these days now rapidly passing?

There may be. A respect for history and past achievement seems more appropriate just now. As ASCD members we may wish to pay more than passing attention to the substance and message of the ASCD 1976 Yearbook, *Perspectives on Curriculum Development 1776-1976*. This impressive work needs more than a casual glance if one is to appreciate and savor the sense of history in our own special field of endeavor (that of curriculum development, instructional improvement) that it conveys to the thoughtful reader. Likewise, its photographs and its "vignettes" of persons and ideas in education bring to the reader a feeling of the immediacy of history. Members of this organization can take renewed pride in the fact that they helped make possible the availability of such a volume. Such a renewal in our own field gives us new strength and commitment in the area in which we spend our efforts, our lives. This is essentially the message of the Bicentennial Celebration for all of us.

Another lesson we may have sensed in this great year is the hunger of our great nation's citizens for a rebirth of morality—not just in high office but throughout the land. Hopefully the processes written into the American dream—those of self-correction and self-renewal—may help us through the vestiges of the dark days just past.

The yearning for morality and for a return to a sense of justice can, hopefully, serve us well in the coming days. For we get from our elected "servants" just about what we demand; consequently, our demands must be for the highest and the best and most unselfish. We, too, in our everyday lives must exemplify the same kind of morality.

Children and young people need opportunities for experience in moral education. In

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this connection, curriculum workers may find helpful the statement made a number of years ago by Hartshorne and May:

... the main attention of educators should be placed not so much on devices of teaching honesty or any other "trait" as on the reconstruction of school practices in such a way as to provide not occasional but consistent and regular opportunities for the successful use by both teachers and pupils of such forms and conduct as make for the common good.¹

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Curriculum workers may also be strengthened in their cooperative efforts to improve the instructional programs by utilizing the following insights:

In this society, with its many values, some confused and conflicting, two values are basic: a belief in the potential worth of each individual and group intelligence in the solution of problems. When either of these basic issues is challenged, democracy is threatened. The teacher, as the agent of a democratic state, has a responsibility to help students develop attitudes and beliefs that are consistent with these fundamentals of democracy.²

Much that is found in this issue and in the succeeding issues of the journal this year will exemplify these insights. The work of the curriculum director or of any other person who can help to shape instruction in schools is not peripheral; it is central to the survival and enhancement of education in a democratic society. This is the fact that we must not forget as we try to work with others to clarify purposes and needs, and to mobilize resources to meet them.

Themes for 1976-77

That the content of this journal is directed to meeting the needs, interests, and concerns of the membership of ASCD comes as no surprise to long-time members and readers. Each fall a survey is made of the ideas and concerns of members. Findings of the study are part of the data considered by the Publications Committee at its fall meeting, when tentative plans for the issues of the journal for the coming year are projected.

After the tentative plans are constructed, the outlines are submitted to many persons for reactions, and suggestions of names of able contributors who might be asked to write articles for the issues. A brief description of the issues follows:

- "Who Is Involved in Curriculum Development?" is the question posed in this issue. Many persons are involved in curriculum construction today. Government agencies are involved at the federal, state, and local levels. State departments of education, local districts, and schools are engaging in the making of curricula. Publishing firms, private businesses, industries, and foundations have contributed significantly in the development of curricula. Teachers, students, and the community have at times become involved in curriculum decision making. Contributors to this issue look penetratingly at the whole picture of "involvement" in curriculum development. Since this is an area of some ambiguity, we hope that the statements in this issue will bring, if not direct answers, at least some further clarification of the dimensions of this complex question.

¹H. Hartshorne and M. A. May. *Studies in Deceit*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928. p. 262.

²Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *Toward Better Teaching*. 1949 Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1949. p. 155.

• "Politics and Education: New Challenges, New Problems" is the focus for November. Contributors will examine the intimate but often unrecognized interrelationship between politics and education.

We recognize that many of the factors and forces that affect education originate in the legislature or are related to political decisions and priorities. If curriculum workers are to be effective, they need to understand and utilize political processes. They need to know and to communicate effectively with people in the political arena, and learn how to influence legislative priorities rather than simply react to political decisions.

• "Emphasis on Staff Development" is the topic for December. Writers for the issue will attempt to show how change is being mandated for all of us by many converging forces. This is especially true of persons in school work. Decreasing enrollments, economic recession, the growing militancy of staff personnel—these are some of the factors forcing change upon us, whether we will it or not.

In an attempt to provide for meeting such urgent needs, many school systems are allocating a larger proportion of their budgets for purposes of "staff development." Such systems recognize that the continuing education of school people cannot be the exclusive responsibility of universities, but rather, may be looked upon more constructively in light of new cooperative relationships between universities and schools. Contributors to this issue have been selected largely because of their close identity with practical programs of staff development.

• "Determining the Quality of Education" is the theme for January. This is a central topic in education representing both a deep concern and an ultimate challenge. Writers for this issue will examine both aspects of this topic and give us current information concerning the status of our ability to determine the quality of education.

"What are students learning?" is a persistent question in education. School people know how difficult it is to answer this query, but legislators, board members, the general public, and other concerned citizens continue to ask it nonetheless. Curriculum workers have a special need for evaluating the effects of curriculum they help develop.

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• "Individualized Instruction: Another Look" is the theme for February. Contributors to the issue are being asked to reassess the purposes, accomplishments, problems, and prospects of individualized instruction. Such instruction is construed as being specifically designed to be different for different individuals based on their individual characteristics and potentialities.

For the past decade at least, individualization has been a priority goal of many educators. Conferences, publications, and countless speeches have been devoted to "individualization." Nevertheless, there is still considerable misunderstanding and disagreement as to what it is, whether or not it is desirable, and whether or not it is a realistic goal, given the state of educational technology and financial limitations.

• "Providing for Disaffected Youth" is the topic for March. Contributors to the issue will examine why education fails a high proportion of our young people and will suggest how the curriculum, the roles, sanctions, and practices of schools can be changed to meet better the needs of disaffected youth. Writers will indicate the

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values to society, to the school system, and to educators of increasing holding power.

- The April issue will be “non-theme” in the sense that the articles will be selected solely on the basis of timeliness and significance. Such an approach tried experimentally in the May 1976 issue seemed to meet with considerable success.

- “Instructional Supervision: Trends and Issues” is the theme for May. Modernization of the role and function of instructional supervision is a most timely subject for investigation by professional educators. Concerns related to instructional supervision abound. In some situations, supervisors are being bypassed by boards of education who are intent on enforcing their views of accountability simplistically measured by standardized test scores. Other examples can be given of supervisors being bypassed because of various expressions of teacher power that concentrate on increased benefits for teachers as the first priority. Professionally, many teachers are developing their own skills for peer supervision through team approaches and sophisticated modes of professional growth.

Concerns can be alleviated if instructional supervision can meet the challenge of present issues in education and can demonstrate that it

has an indispensable role in helping to find solutions to daily and long-range problems in the schools. Competent instructional supervision has never been more sorely needed, as schools find themselves fully staffed with tenured teachers, not all of whom are committed to lifelong learning in the area of professional growth in teaching.

The content of the journal continues to reflect our efforts to make the articles, features, and editorials both timely and relevant. New sources, more “involved” writers, carefully selected unsolicited materials, use of longer, more “in-depth” papers, interviews with important personages—these are some of the innovations that will make these pages more helpful, meaningful, and significant for readers in the coming days.

With this issue, too, *Educational Leadership* appears in new format and design. This grows out of the work of the artist, with the suggestions and guidance of the editorial and production staff members.

We look forward, with you, to another year of hope and accomplishment, in a spirit of rededication to the field of the high endeavor that is ours. [E]

Who Should Be Involved in Curriculum Development?

Ronald Brandt

A good many Americans are losing confidence in their schools. And some of us educators are not so sure of ourselves, either. Oh, we're trying. We have a little of everything: some district or state curriculum guides, some commercial materials, some products of federal research and development, some school-planned mini-courses, some special projects. In short, a hodgepodge. Pressures on teachers are overwhelming; effects on students are not completely understood.

Surrounded by people who are deciding, or who want to decide what should be taught, we are reminded that “too many cooks spoil the broth.” We need an understanding among all the cooks about what each can best contribute to the recipe.

Bits and pieces may make good soup, but a comprehensive curriculum takes more than that. Curriculum development is the planning of programs designed to enable people to learn.

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