

Book Reviews

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The Middle School Curriculum: A Practitioner's Handbook. Leslie W. Kindred, Rita J. Wolotkiewicz, John Mickelson, Leonard E. Coplein, and Ernest Dyson. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976. 216 pp. —Reviewed by Theodore C. Moss, Professor of Education, State University College, Oswego, New York.

Here is an attractively designed book that is well organized from rationale through evaluation. The five authors have done a good job of condensing the major aspects of curriculum for middle schools in a highly readable manner. Three of the writers are associated with Temple University; the other two received their doctorates from Temple and are superintendents of schools. Hence, there is a balance between the theoretical and the practical.

Some strengths of the book are the attention paid to philosophy, learning theories, and change. Clearly these are essential areas to consider if practitioners are to follow Silberman's dictum to know: "Why [we] are doing what [we] are doing." Yet the treatment of these topics is rather brief. The inclusion of "Readings for the Teacher" would have added a dimension to this section.

While Chapter 2 focuses on the child, there is too little description of the characteristics of children aged 10 to 14. No reference is made to such excellent readings as those edited by Kagen and Coles, 12-16: *Early Adolescence* (Norton, 1972), and their very similar articles in *Daedalus* (Volume 100, Fall 1971).

As essential background for curriculum, the five authors present a fair summary of learning and intellectual development. Un-



fortunately, like so many others, they rely too heavily on secondary sources for their Piaget. However, their implications for curriculum development are theoretically and practically sound. For example, they suggest that teachers start with the concrete in grades five and six and utilize many experiences in helping children acquire skills and knowledge.

Chapter 4, "Curriculum Design," contains an excellent overview of the topic as well as some clearly defined terms, but it lacks reference to some standard works on curriculum such as the ones by Saylor and Alexander. For middle school organization and programs

(Chapter 5), a 1972 doctoral study is utilized to present data on actual middle schools. Clearly, this adds to the practicality of the book.

The chapter on individualizing instruction raises some excellent questions for teachers to consider prior to embarking on any program of an individualized nature. Regrettably, the authors do not put enough stress on the pitfalls of individualized learning. The very changeable nature of children aged 10-14 precludes the exclusive use of individualized learning in middle schools. Many early adolescents become bored with this type of program day in and day out. They need a change of pace.

Thirteen excellent criteria are provided for the reader in the chapter on technology. It is obvious that these criteria and the summaries presented in this chapter should be of great assistance to all personnel associated with middle schools. On the other hand, the chapter devoted to activities is rather weak. For example, in presenting outdoor education, the authors make little mention of the many possibilities for outdoor education or why and how outdoor education programs help meet the needs of early adolescents or make the curriculum more experiential. Nor do the writers present a sound rationale for homerooms.

"Staff Organization and Utilization," Chapter 9, provides some

helpful suggestions on team planning. The writers seem to favor the interdisciplinary approach to "teaming."

The final chapter, "Evaluating Performance," is mostly a glossary of evaluation terms. Certainly this can be valuable to practitioners who have not read about or had courses dealing with the topic. This reviewer wonders why the authors have not dealt with formative and summative evaluation. Unique to this chapter are some excellent readings for teachers. Why didn't the writers include similar sections in the other nine chapters?

Art, music, industrial arts, home economics, health education, and physical education ought to be in the middle school curriculum. Yet these areas do not receive much attention in this book. It is also unfortunate that more space is not devoted to the role of guidance in the middle school curriculum.

In summary, if practitioners are looking for the one book to help them, this is not it. If, on the other hand, teachers are looking for a good summary of current middle school curriculum as a point of departure, this book—augmented by established books on the middle school—can be very helpful. *The Middle School Curriculum: A Practitioner's Handbook* is a worthy addition to the growing literature on middle schools.

Classroom Management: Remediation and Prevention. *Howard N. Sloane. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1976. 147 pp. —Reviewed by Todd Hoover, Assistant Professor of Education, Southern Oregon State College, Ashland, Oregon.*

Howard Sloane provides the classroom teacher with a highly readable book that clearly focuses on many of the difficulties encountered today—especially those disruptive student behaviors that

seem to sustain themselves. He addresses the concern that many of the problems related to classroom management probably would not occur if a good curriculum and good planning had been attended to first by the teacher.

Assuming the curriculum and planning have been improved, and there are still a few individuals giving problems, Mr. Sloane discusses a full range of responses to inappropriate student behavior. The book is arranged so that the Table of Contents can be referred to when classifying the behavioral problems. After reading the first chapter, the teacher needs only to focus on the particular chapter that discusses the problem for which he/she is seeking a solution. Specifically, the classification of problems is as follows: Out-of-seat, Talking-out, and Other Overactive Behavior (Chapter 2); Aggressive Behavior (Chapter 3); Crying and Tantrums (Chapter 4); Over-quiet, Isolate Behavior (Chapter 5); Creating an Attentive Class (Chapter 6); Work Completion (Chapter 7); Work Routines (Chapter 8); Reducing Cheating (Chapter 9); and Management Systems and General Disruptions (Chapter 10).

Each of the above chapters is approximately ten to fifteen pages in length, thereby allowing for relatively quick reading. The chapters are introduced with a brief explanation of the problem behavior followed by examples of inappropriate behavior serving to clarify the explanation. Several potential solutions are offered for each class of behaviors. The solutions are thorough and usually include a research base from which the solutions were generated. Conveniently, the necessary steps to get the behavior under control are listed for each potential solution.

This book applies many principles of behavior-shaping but with a common sense approach and using a highly readable format. Many of the examples focus on the elementary child, but the potential solutions are equally applicable to secondary schools. In fact, many of the behaviors used

for illustrative purposes exhibit themselves just as frequently among our middle, junior, and senior high students.

In summary, this book is exceptionally well-organized, serving as a handy reference for the teacher. As Sloane implies, improvement of classroom management skills is no substitute for good curriculum and good planning. However, if some children still do not respond, it probably will be necessary to examine the child's behavior and to apply the appropriate remediation suggested by Sloane.

Make Your Schools Work. *Harvey Scribner and Leonard Stevens. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1976. 141 pp. —Reviewed by Willard L. Hogeboom, history teacher, Babylon High School and Suffolk County Community College, Long Island, New York.*

This new book by the former Chancellor of the New York City Schools, Harvey Scribner, and his research assistant at the University of Massachusetts, Leonard Stevens, begins with the question: For whom do the public schools exist? For the professionals who run them, say the authors, not for the children who attend them. To counter this they call for more community control and present "Ten Plans for Reform."

Most of their proposals are directed at individualizing education—for example, promoting students on their birthdays rather than once a year in groups; having older students tutor younger ones on a one-to-one basis; keeping schools open all year and letting parents and students decide which 180 days they will attend; apprenticeship programs in the local community; external diplomas for dropouts, based upon equivalency tests; allotting to dropouts the money that would have been spent on their education had they re-

mained in school, for them to spend on further education.

Beginning with a claim that professionals have too much control of education, the authors go to the other extreme in proposing to leave out the professionals almost entirely. If any lesson can be learned from the many educational reforms which have failed over recent years, it is that no reform can be successful without the support and cooperation of the professionals, especially the teachers, who are involved.

Not only does this book not encourage building working relationships between school professionals and community parents, it tries to set one against the other, creating a "we versus them" polarization: parents whose consciousness has been raised by this book on one side, and school professionals who are cast as villains on the other.

It is one thing to recognize the indisputable fact that the public and its school boards are in control of education, but quite another to advocate, as the authors do, that they should run the schools on a day-to-day basis, determining what shall be taught, how it shall be taught, and who shall teach it.

While the professionals do not always give "what is good for the students" first priority, the experience of the decentralization experiment in New York City, especially the Ocean Hill/Brownsville debacle, indicates that "what is good for the students" doesn't fare any better in the hands of many of the so-called community groups which emerged at that time. Community control in the form that it has taken until now is designed to solve political problems, not educational problems. It has been a sop to local interest groups, not a solution to the question of "what is good for the students."

Scribner and Stevens, like so many recent critics of education, are not going to produce better school systems by playing one group against another in the arena of public education. As long as the public schools remain a po-

litical football, better educational systems will remain an elusive goal.

Curriculum Theory. *Third Edition.* George A. Beauchamp. Wilmette, Illinois: The Kagg Press, 1975. 216 pp. —Reviewed by Norman J. Bauer, Professor of Education, Division of Educational Studies, State University of New York, College of Arts and Sciences, Geneseo.

"Theory is in the end," according to Dewey, "... the most practical of all things." Like the first two editions of *Curriculum Theory*, George Beauchamp's third edition reflects a firm belief in the value of Dewey's assertion. The work is distinguished by a disciplined use of technical language, and a clear theoretical comprehension of curriculum, in a blend that has become altogether unique to Beauchamp. He refuses to be caught in the trap of conceptual vagueness and the concomitant temptation to engage in undisciplined thinking, tendencies which characterize all too much curricular writing.

Rather, even the most difficult-seeming curricular terms are treated in a clear and precise style. For example, a "curriculum" consists of a "written document"; the "design" of a curriculum is represented by the goals of a school and the substance (for example, culture content, subject matter) that is to be taught at the various grade levels; curriculum "engineering" consists of the activities pursued by those responsible for implementing and improving the system (for example, superintendent, principal, curriculum director); and curricular "system" is made up of the "planning," "implementing," and "evaluating" functions.

These and other definitions constitute the basis of 23 propositions that reveal what George A. Beauchamp calls the "nucleus of a

curricular theory." The propositions consist of axioms, prescriptions, assumptions, and generalizations, subdivided into a "design" dimension and an "engineering" dimension. The first of twelve design propositions stipulates that a curriculum is "a written document." Of the eleven engineering propositions, one declares that: "Curriculum implementation is greatly facilitated when planning groups include classroom teachers who must do the implementing."

Beauchamp's theory represents a reputable piece of disciplined curricular scholarship, particularly in its chartings of precise meanings and in its clear and responsible thinking. He is aware of the fact that in order to have a sense of stability and security in an age of increasing complexity and uncertainty, an educator must be well grounded in theory. He understands that the value of any theory ultimately is reflected in the bearing it has on the specific, complex human situations toward which it is directed. Furthermore, he recognizes that any clarification and enlightenment of vision in a field as complex and difficult to comprehend as curriculum is a prerequisite for anyone interested in improving the effectiveness of his or her performance. Beauchamp's work is, therefore, a gift to those who care deeply about the field of curriculum, as well as about the art of clear writing itself.

Using Statistics in Classroom Instruction. Edward A. Townsend. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1975. 94 pp. —Reviewed by Russell F. Jones, Doctoral Candidate in Clinical Psychology; David G. Carter Sr., Associate Professor of Educational Administration, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, and J. John Harris III, Associate Professor of School Administration, Indiana University, Bloomington.

The purpose of this book is to assist classroom teachers in acquiring the expertise necessary to assess instruments designed to evaluate the progress of students.

Many classroom teachers tend to view statistics as an area to be avoided. This dislike of statistics often sets the stage for avoidance also of any other mathematical functions with a high degree of complexity. These fears are often reinforced by an aversion toward numbers and symbols in the analysis of classroom data.

This text, *Using Statistics in Classroom Instruction*, presents statistics in a new and much needed approach, which may well rid the classroom teacher of his or her fears of valuable statistical tools. It is an attempt to enable the classroom teacher to perform simple but important statistical procedures more efficiently and precisely, and to provide him or

her with the statistical skills to relate to standardized tests and to interpret scores.

In the first of six chapters, the topic of scores is discussed. To ensure full understanding and mastery of the concepts and issues highlighted, a restatement of the major objectives is presented at the end of this and every other chapter. Accompanying the restatement is a list of pertinent study questions.

Chapter 2 focuses on measures of central tendency. The concepts of mean, median, and mode are thoroughly reviewed with suggestions provided for their proper use. Chapter 3 deals with methods of expressing score variability. Various characteristics of the normal curve are also discussed.

Common reporting practices are presented in chapter 4. Advantages and disadvantages of

percentiles and percentages are alluded to, with suggestions made for the proper use of each. Ways of effectively reporting scores are also discussed. Relationships between various scores are given in Chapter 5. Correlations, scattergrams, and the computation and interpretation of coefficients of correlation are topics thoroughly reviewed. The final chapter gives a detailed description of how to interpret test scores. Answers and suggestions are presented to ensure understanding of each chapter.

In the opinion of the reviewers, *Using Statistics in Classroom Instruction* is a "must" text for every classroom teacher's library. In addition to providing a wealth of knowledge pertaining to classroom use of statistics, the book also aids tremendously in increasing comprehension of evaluation articles often related to classroom instruction. \square

Reviewers



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