

# Reviews

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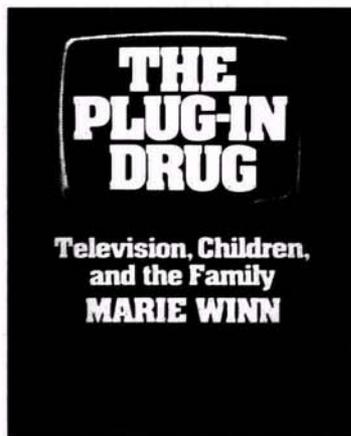
**The Plug-In Drug: Television, Children, and the Family.** Marie Winn. New York: The Viking Press, 1977. — Reviewed by Charlene Rothkopf, Media Coordinator, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Washington, D.C.

Recently a trial took place in Miami, Florida, where Ronney Zamora, 15, was accused of first-degree murder. His plea of not guilty was based on the argument that Zamora's excessive TV watching, particularly of violent programs, led to a state of temporary insanity at the time of the shooting.<sup>1</sup> This trial illustrates the concern that psychiatrists, sociologists, parents, and educators have expressed about the adverse effects of television on children.

Marie Winn vehemently voices her concern in *The Plug-In Drug*, in which she criticizes parental lack of control over TV watching, particularly by preschool children. Her argument focuses not on the content of TV programs, which is critical to the Zamora case; but, instead, on the very act of watching TV itself. Recalling the prophetic ideas of Marshall McLuhan, Winn deals with the effects of the medium, not the "message."

She attempts to raise the consciousness of the American public to understand the powerful, mesmerizing capability of television, which can induce a drugged or trance-like state in the viewer.

Winn is especially concerned with the effect of this trance-like state on the preschool child who is at a vulnerable period of development. Older children and adults have "a vast backlog of real-life experiences (p. 9)" that come into play when viewing TV. At the pre-



school age, the child's perceptions of reality are just beginning to be shaped along with the development of basic verbal and motor skills. According to Winn, television, often conveniently used as a babysitter, has displaced the real-life experiences that children need to be engaged in. Time spent on TV viewing has eliminated time spent reading, playing, and interacting with others. Even such educational programs as *Sesame Street* are criticized because they are taking time away from other human contact-type activities that children require.

A point of interest to educators that is brought out in the book is the correlation between the decline in scholastic aptitude test scores and the existence of televi-

sion. According to Winn, the "decline that began in 1964 . . . is precisely the year that those first children exposed to large doses of television during their language-learning years sat down to take their college boards (p. 92)." A recent U.S. panel, formed to study this test score decline phenomenon, also pointed to the impact of television as one of the contributing factors; however, they present the information with a more positive prognosis: "Yet we are convinced that television and related forms of communication give the future of learning its largest promise."<sup>2</sup>

Winn's arguments are based on many interviews with parents, children, teachers, and child specialists, and of course, are open to debate. Eric Sevareid writes, "It [television] is destroying the habit of reading, they say. This is nonsense. Book sales in this country during the lifetime of general television have greatly increased and well beyond the increase in the population." And about the use of the English language, he states,

<sup>1</sup> Tom Shales. "The Trial of Ronney Zamora, Live and In Color." *Washington Post*, October 6, 1977. p. C-1

<sup>2</sup> Advisory Panel on the Scholastic Aptitude Test Score Decline. *On Further Examination*. New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1977. p. 47.

“. . . this medium has improved the general level of diction.”<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, more scientific data are necessary. Whether the reader agrees with Winn's statements or not, one can agree that "parents need to think about television in a new way, and need to consider the role it plays in their children's lives and in their lives together as a family (p. viii)."

*The Plug-In Drug* is clearly a condemnation of television. The reader must be careful, therefore, not to make television a scapegoat for all of the ills of society. Tossing out the TV set, as Winn talks about in the section, "No Television," seems unrealistic in any kind of large scale or meaningful way in our country. Too much of our information comes from television, and it is too much an integral part of our culture to eliminate it. However, creating an awareness of how TV "massages" its viewers makes this an important and worthwhile book. Hopefully, it can stimulate further research into TV's effect on children's growth and development, which we desperately need.

**New Designs for Elementary Curriculum and Instruction, Second edition.** John U. Michaelis, Ruth H. Grossman, Lloyd F. Scott. New York: McGraw-Hill

Book Company, 1975.—Reviewed by Oliver A. Pamplin, Director of Elementary Education, Albemarle County Schools, Charlottesville, Virginia.

While not particularly unique in the topics covered, this book should prove to be especially practical for the elementary teacher and/or administrator. The authors present a framework and models for analyzing, developing, and evaluating curriculum.

In this second edition, the authors have included additional components dealing with current principles of curriculum development. Up-to-date trends and developments in each subject area are included in the revision.

Beginning with a review of historical elements related to the development of current educational philosophies, goals, objectives, and teaching strategies, the authors provide an expanded analysis of philosophical, social, psychological, and disciplinary foundations of curriculum. Guidelines for determining objectives are offered, as well as organization of the curriculum, classes, and instructional media. Evaluation and accountability are clearly presented so that even the beginning teacher may find this chapter easily transferable to a classroom situation.

The identification and selection of teaching strategies, often a major task of teachers and curriculum planners, are discussed in some detail. Actual examples of concept development strategies are used to illustrate discovery-inductive strategies. Role-playing, simulations, and value analysis and clarification are discussed briefly, with examples given to illustrate these teaching techniques.

Part II of the book includes instructional models of every subject/skill area usually offered in the elementary and middle school. Language arts, reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and health and physical education are discussed in some detail. One chapter is devoted to each of these skill areas. These should prove practical for the classroom teacher.

The authors end their text with the development of understanding, skills, and attitudes that cut across the various disciplines. This assists the reader in viewing the total school program. This book might well be in each school's library for professional educators because of its value as a quick reference source. It may also serve as an appropriate textbook for per-

<sup>3</sup>Eric Sevareid. "TV and the Highbrow." *Washington Post*. June 13, 1976. p. C-8. Excerpted from his speech at the Washington Journalism Center.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION (Act of August 12, 1970; Section 3685. Title 39, United States Code). 1. Title of publication: Educational Leadership. 2. Date of Filing: December 9, 1977. 3. Frequency of issue: Eight times a year, October through May. 4. Number of issues published annually: Eight. 5. Annual subscription price: \$10.00. 6. Location of known office of publication: 1701 K St., N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20006. 7. Location of headquarters or general business offices of the publishers: Same address. 8. Names and complete addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1701 K St., N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20006; Editor, Robert R. Leeper, 1701 K St., N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20006; Managing Editor, none. 9. Owner: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1701 K St., N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20006. 10. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None. 9. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates (Section 132.122, PSM): The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months. 10. Extent and nature of circulation: (A) Total number of copies printed (net press run): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 30,500; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 33,000; (B) Paid circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales: Average number of copies each issue

during preceding 12 months, 132; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 47; 2. Mail subscriptions: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 27,273; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 30,189; (C) Total paid circulation (Sum of 10B1 and 10B2): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 27,905; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 30,236; (D) Free distribution by mail, carrier, or other means—samples, complimentary, and other free copies: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 277; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 285; (E) Total distribution (Sum of C and D): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 28,182; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 30,521; (F) Copies not distributed: 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 2,318; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 2,479; 2. Returns from news agents: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, none; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, none; (G) Total (Sum of E, F1 and 2): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 30,500; actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date, 33,000.

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (Signed) John H. Bralove, Business Manager.

sons studying elementary curriculum.

**School Zone: Learning Environments for Children.** Anne P. Taylor and George Vlastos. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1975. 144 pp. —Reviewed by Donald Peckenpaugh, Superintendent, Birmingham, Michigan, Public Schools.

*School Zone: Learning Environments for Children* offers a method for designing schools as learning environments for children and demonstrates a way of using curriculum to determine that design. Based on the assumption that physical setting does contribute to learning, the book suggests ways to modify both indoor and outdoor learning spaces so that they are an integral part of the educational process. In addition, it provides plans and drawings for new educational furniture and equipment. Practical information is given on how to assess the use being made of existing classroom and playground areas, and what is to be learned in such space, and then how to use the resulting informa-

tion in designing richer, more aesthetic, humanistic, learning environments.

The authors give constant emphasis to the importance of the physical learning environment and give practical advice on how to proceed to design both indoor and outdoor learning environments. Special emphasis is given on designing facilities for an "open classroom" setting and how to work in one.

The co-authors bring complementary interests and skills to the project. Anne Taylor is Assistant Dean of the graduate school of the University of New Mexico. She teaches both in the departments of art education and architecture. She has designed day-care centers, educational settings, and playgrounds with her co-author, and for the last five years has been studying the effects of environment on learning and behavior of children. Taylor lives in an adobe house on an apple farm with her husband, four children, and numerous animals.

George Vlastos is a graduate of the College of Architecture, Arizona State University, where he minored in art history and graphic design. He temporarily gave up his

traditional architecture practice to study children, child development, educational philosophy, and curriculum. He now resides in Casper, Wyoming, where he designs schools for the Gordon-South architectural firm.

The illustrations by George Vlastos are interesting, and the layout is most attractive; but, the numerous photographs are truly outstanding and give the book its special character.

Taylor and Vlastos point out that a willingness to change could be an antidote to the traditional classroom blues. For this reason, I recommend this book as a starting point to rethink the traditional planning process, before it begins. Administrators, curriculum specialists, and even board members should read it before they begin to plan new school facilities.

This book offers a process for designing alternatives to the traditional in learning environments. Anything can happen, anywhere, and at any time, to help or hinder a child's learning. If the designer makes full use of an environment, it may become rich enough to lead the child to learning. *School Zone* shows the direction! <sup>71</sup>

## Reviewers



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