

Letters

Dear Editor:

A few comments and concerns about the recent issue, *Competencies as the Aim of Education* (EL November 1977).

1. Competencies, however defined, are the product or result of instruction and learning. Many of the writers in the issue construct an unreal dichotomy between "humane curriculum" and competencies.

2. Narrowly defined competencies such as reading and writing are tools to content teachers. They don't teach these skills, but rather use them. A curriculum that uses such skills will produce competencies that will be tested independently of instruction.

3. More broadly-defined competencies in the "survival" skill definition can be fused into existing courses. Once districts define their competencies, look within existing curricula and find the logical and natural place for their inclusion.

Let's not moan and bewail the onset of externally imposed demands. They may cause an assessment of the current curriculum and give rigor and reality to instruction.

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Dear Editor:

I have two thoughts I would like to share in response to the October 1977 issue's topic on Behaviorism vs. Humanism.¹

First, there are many more "superlative" humanistic teachers using behavioral evidence

than Mr. Popham suggests. Glenn A. Jorgenson's *Positive Action Theory of Behavior*, which involves improving the development of a healthy emotional lifestyle, is in widespread use in many districts in the state of Idaho and in the state of California. Mr. Jorgenson, a behavioral scientist at the Institute of Behavioral Science of Southern Ca. at Monrovia, identifies many behavioral objectives that can be measured in his humanistic curriculum.

Second, Mr. Hosford's comments on the "silent curriculum" not being defined in advance brought to mind Madeline Hunter's work on *Teaching, A Scientific Process*. Madeline's identification of "how" teachers do what they do includes three critical teacher decisions, five elements of instruction, and four areas identified as principles of learning. One of the five elements is monitor and adjust. This relates directly to the "how" being defined in overt behavioral objectives in advance and evaluated objectively through observation.

My concern is not that these thoughts were omitted because the dialogue was pertinent and revealing, but that ASCD might pursue the "how" in the silent curriculum referred to by Mr. Hosford.

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EL

¹ Arthur W. Combs, W. James Popham, and Philip L. Hosford. "Behaviorism and Humanism: A Synthesis?" *Educational Leadership* 35(1):52-63; October 1977.

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