

# Reviews

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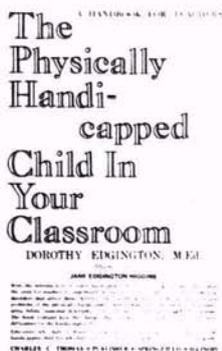
**Helping Children Overcome Learning Difficulties.** Jerome Rosner. New York: Walker and Company, 1975. 321 pp. **Teaching Handicapped Children Easily.** Herbert Neff and Judith Pilch. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1976. 256 pp. **The Physically Handicapped Child in Your Classroom.** Dorothy Edgington. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1976. 75 pp.—Reviewed by Carole E. Greenes, Associate Professor of Education, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts; and Linda A. Schulman, Instructor in Education, Lesley College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Currently, there has been a surge of interest in the curricular aspects of working with the disabled learner. Concerns have been evidenced by administrators, classroom teachers, and parents. The three books reviewed here consider a variety of learning handicaps from the point of view of the teacher and the parent.

The need for parental involvement in the educational process of the disabled learner is essential. This need has been recognized by many educators. Nevertheless, to date, little or nothing has been written for the parent, describing the disabilities and providing a valuable and easily implemented program for meeting and perhaps, overcoming the learning problem.

In *Helping Children Overcome Learning Difficulties*, Jerome Rosner sets forth two goals for the parent: first, to improve the child's "learning skills," that is, teaching the child how to more efficiently analyze, organize, and associate information; and second, to help the child in the basic academic content areas (reading, arithmetic, spelling).

The book begins with an "Introduction," presenting an overview of the text, defining terminology



particular to special education, and describing characteristics of the learning-disabled child. Part I, "Testing the Child," discusses health-related tests (medical, vision, hearing) and education-related tests (visual and auditory perception, motor development, IQ and academic achievement). Dr. Rosner suggests that parents administer tests in the areas of visual and auditory perception and motor coordination, but that academic testing remain the school's domain. Part II, "Teaching the Child," is both the strongest and weakest section of the book. The activities described for teaching visual and

auditory perceptual skills and general motor skills are well designed and tightly sequenced. The activities related to the academic areas of reading, arithmetic, and spelling do not reflect current findings of how children best acquire certain academic concepts and the appropriate materials to use in presenting these concepts to the learning-disabled child. Part III, "Prevention," presents excellent perception and motor activities for the preschool child. Dr. Rosner recommends that parents teach their children basic skills before they enter the first grade in order to "prevent" learning problems, and to give the child a "head start."

In general, Jerome Rosner has a tendency to oversimplify the problems of a disabled learner, and to oversimplify corrective measures. However, parents must be informed and should be provided with guidelines for assisting their child. This book offers a reasonable guide for parents, with some outstanding specific activities.

*Teaching Handicapped Children Easily* is written for teachers, teacher trainees, and parents without prior "special training," who will be working with children who

have mild and moderate learning handicaps. Following the introduction, Chapter 2 identifies the different subgroups (slow learners, educable and trainable mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, socially maladjusted, learning-disabled, sight and hearing handicapped, culturally disadvantaged, gifted achievers, and underachievers). The next several chapters deal with these groups together and consider classroom management, diagnosis, and teaching strategies. The remainder of the book considers general educational issues that are applicable to all children, with or without handicaps.

The dangers of labeling a child are stressed. The authors suggest that teachers' time be best used in assessing each student and developing suitable learning experiences. A checklist for diagnosis is provided, but all characteristics are stated in negative terms that this reviewer found disconcerting. Individualized instruction, defined as the teacher working with the child on a 1:1 basis for approximately 10 to 15 minutes a day, is suggested as crucial to the learning process for these children. In the midst of individualized learning packets and programmed instruction, this reminder of the original definition of individualized learning is important.

The authors provide sound, rational, humanistic approaches to education, reaffirming the basic principles of good teaching. A seasoned teacher with a positive attitude toward his or her students may find chapters such as "Motivation for Learning," "Be Careful With Grades," "Competition Can Be Dangerous," "What Is a Good Teacher," and "Excellence," lacking significant new insights. As an introductory volume, it offers the reader worthwhile generalized suggestions for working with these children, but teachers hoping to find specific techniques to meet specific student needs should look elsewhere.

Presently legislation and administrative practices have required the integration of physically handi-

capped children into regular classroom settings. Most classroom teachers have not been provided with adequate training to deal with handicapped children. *The Physically Handicapped Child in Your Classroom* is designed to give the teacher some knowledge of six major disorders that cause physical handicaps in children: cerebral palsy, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, epilepsy, and Legg-Perthes disease.

One chapter is devoted to each disorder, outlining its basic physical attributes, causes, symptoms, treatments, and problems that may occur in the school situation. The descriptions are concise, easily understood, and do not require previous medical knowledge. The reader should be able to reach a better understanding of these children, feel more comfortable relating to them, and arrive at more appropriate expectations for their achievement.

Also included is a chapter on orthopedic appliances: the wheelchair, crutches, braces, and the Milwaukee splint. Reasons for using each appliance, safety factors involved, and their physical effects on the children are carefully explained.

The author emphasizes that physically-handicapped children have emotional needs similar to all children, that must be met with understanding and respect. Most teachers would share this opinion, but aren't sure what to do and when to do it. This handbook provides the basic information necessary to begin. Its layman's language is appreciated, but an annotated bibliography for the reader seeking more information about these problems or about children with different physical disorders might have been helpful. *The Physically Handicapped Child in Your Classroom* is a valuable resource and should be available in school libraries and in the hands of classroom teachers.

**Children Learn To Communicate.** Sara W. Lundsteen. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey:

Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976. 457 pp.  
—Reviewed by Rita J. Sullivan,  
Assistant Professor of Education,  
Kansas State University, Man-  
hattan.

This book is meant for a language arts methods course using a creative problem-solving approach rather than drill-type practice in basic mental processes. From the preface to the epilogue, Lundsteen stresses that the curriculum for language learning is a program in thinking designed to help children who have *something to say to say it better and to help them have something better to say* because they listen, read, and think well. A definition given on page three is that language arts includes both intake and output during listening, reading, speaking, and writing; not only development of skills, but also the enjoyment of literature and the chance to satisfy any curiosity about the nature of language, its uses and misuses.

*Children Learn To Communicate* is divided into three sections. Part I identifies, explains, defines, and justifies developmental bases for language, thought, and listening. Part II develops the uses of languages. See Chapter 4 for a refreshing explanation of how teachers help children learn discussion skills. Part III consists of teaching composition, spelling, handwriting, punctuation, and other conventions of written composition. Begin reading on page 251 with "motivation and minorities" for ideas about motivating children through the language arts program. Many suggestions, activities, and ideas are well presented.

This reviewer felt that the creative problem-solving was belabored. However, as chapter after chapter unfolds, Lundsteen effectively states, defends, and documents her philosophy so consistently that one is convinced that this is the approach to take when teaching language arts. For an example, see page 119 where self-expression is tied to problem solving in the area of human relations.

The outline in the margin makes for easy reading. Additional activities for children using the creative problem-solving approach are listed at the end of each chapter. The bibliography entitled, "If You Want To Learn More" not only lists books, but gives brief annotations about certain specific books. Minorities are not forgotten people. And, finally, the illustrations done by Lundsteen herself must be mentioned not only because of their charm, but because they are lifelike and are fashioned very closely to classroom situations.

In total, this book is a welcome addition to the existing literature in the field of language arts. It would be an excellent resource text for prospective and in-service teachers in providing approaches that are realistic to the teaching of language arts.

**Transition to Teaching.** Ellis D. Evans. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976. 156 pp. —Reviewed by Todd J. Hoover, Assistant Professor of Education, Southern Oregon State College.

Think back to the days when we were beginning teachers. We were concerned with many issues some of which were frustratingly obscure. Ellis Evans through delineation and clarification brings these obscure issues into focus in his book entitled *Transition to Teaching*. While the book concentrates on the beginning teacher, it also has relevance to later phases of preservice teacher education. It is a useful guide for helping preservice and beginning teachers to sort and organize thoughts stimulated by the experiences they are having.

Evans speaks directly to the point on several timely matters that the preservice and beginning teacher must face. To the preservice teacher, he indicates that employment prospects are not good, and therefore, the student should carefully consider whether or not he/she truly feels that the education profession is an appropriate career. Evans states clearly that at this time, and for many years to come, only those competent, motivated, and qualified persons should apply to the profession.

A critical concern that Evans approaches consists of the strains

that the beginning teacher experiences. Examples of these strains include: intrafaculty relationships, teacher-administration relationships, values conflicts, and social inequalities. Subsequent to these discussions, the reader is led to perhaps the most important concern—"The pursuit of effectiveness."

In the discussion of the pursuit of effectiveness, Evans identifies three theoretical bases for judging effectiveness. These three bases are: personal qualities and characteristics of the teacher; the transactions occurring between the teacher and the students; and the teacher's impact on the learner. From these positions, Evans discusses how the administrator probably views teacher effectiveness. Evans provides a modest research base for teaching effectiveness, written in a style appropriate for the audience who will read this book.

This book should be read by all individuals who are in the state of transition to teaching—that is, somewhere between the stage of preservice to two or three years of beginning teaching. The reader will be better able to define the anxieties inherent in the state of transition.

## Reviewers



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