

# REVIEWS

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**Coming To Our Senses: The Significance of the Arts for American Education.** *The American Council for the Arts in Education: Special Project Panel, David Rockefeller, Jr., Chairman.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977. —Reviewed by Art Steller, Coordinator of Special Projects—Systemwide Planning, Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland.

The arts in American education have long occupied a position of low priority in the minds of many persons who describe them as a frill or luxury. School budgets typically reflect this line of thought, particularly when the availability of funds constricts. The present public clamor for career enhancing education, "back-to-basics," and the lowering of school taxes increases the pressure on the arts. The title of the book *Coming to Our Senses* was both well chosen and timely.

This lavishly illustrated book is a delight to read due to photographs, cartoons, quotations, and the graphic layout. The concept that for total human development all of the senses need to be fed through the arts is central to the opening chapters. The significance of the arts in promoting all learning by integrating the arts with other curricula is a constant theme, as is the motivational impact of the arts. The present status and history of the arts is also presented in the context of the schools, the media, and the larger community. The roles of teacher training institutions, curriculum developers, educational administrators, and the government are critically reviewed. A list of worthy recommendations makes up the last chapter.

A twenty-five member, blue-chip panel parented by the American Council for the Arts in Educa-

## Coming to our senses

tion authored the report. The chairmanship of David Rockefeller, Jr., coordinated the artists, various board members, business people, scientists, and educators in their two-year study. The impressive list of supporters for this \$3,000,000 research effort was headed by the U.S. Office of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Disney Foundation, the Exxon Corporation, and nine other private foundations. Elaborate news conferences, a speech by Joan Mondale, a film, and various elegant receptions and lunches ushered the report into the public domain. The

hoopla and fanfare surrounding the publication of *Coming to Our Senses* is by itself worthy of study as a change strategy.

One should not dismiss this work as mere pomp and circumstance, for no other single report, since the Rockefeller Panel Report on the Performing Arts of 1965, has generated the kind of professional discussion on the arts as has this volume. Shortly following publication of the former report, the National Endowment for the Arts was created. The aims of *Coming to Our Senses* may be similar when judged by some of the 98 recommendations including:

"A Secretary for Education be added to the Cabinet . . ." with ". . . a Special Advisor for the Arts in Education . . ."; "The President appoint a Special White House Advisor for the Arts . . ."; "A new federal agency called the National Center for the Arts in Education be created . . ."; "The President appoint a National Citizens Council for the Arts in Education . . ."; and "A National Institute for the Study of Arts, Aesthetics, and Education be established."

Some art educators have criticized these recommendations for their bureaucratic nature and for being too numerous to be taken seriously. However, politicians, not educators, will ultimately judge and vote upon those recommendations mentioned earlier, thus determining how seriously they are taken.

Educators do, however, have the power to implement many of the suggestions such as: "Teachers be given enough flexibility in school scheduling to enable them to offer their students much more than superficial exposure to the arts"; or "Inservice arts education programs for teachers be offered." Some recommendations offer practical advice: "In advance of artists' visits to schools, orientation sessions for teachers, artists, and administrators be provided so that the functions of each are clearly appreciated and defined."

The promises of higher reading test scores, well behaved students, and less vandalism when the arts are emphasized in classrooms are examples of overstating the case. The documentation given for such spinoffs is appealing, but it is insufficient to support these claims. The research methodology of the report can be faulted in this area for its lack of objective data. Nevertheless, the importance of the arts in and of their own aesthetic contribution to humankind is sufficient cause for nourishing them, so they will nourish us.

*Coming to Our Senses* is a political document that needs to be read by educators for that reason alone. The findings will be widely dispersed and some of the reforms will be acted upon. The energy of dialogue unleashed by this report needs concrete educational programs, if the arts are to become truly significant in American education.

**Designing Curriculum—Self-Instructional Modules.** John McNeil. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1976. 138 pp. —Reviewed by Norman J. Bauer, Professor, Division of Educational Studies, State University College of Arts and Science, Geneseo, New York.

Four self-instructional modules for acquiring insights about curriculum planning are included in *Designing Curriculum*: (a) de-

veloping learning activities; (b) deriving objectives; (c) selecting among, and justifying the choice of, objectives; and (d) evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum. Each of these modules provides abundant practice in the application of understanding to a variety of relevant curriculum tasks.

This volume helps the student to acquire clear comprehension of the principles associated with appropriate practice, attention to relevant cues, economy, variation, and simplicity. In addition, a cruciality formula is developed for use with needs assessment. The role of other education agencies—mass media, church, home, museums, and so on—rarely examined by curricular workers, represents one significant component of this formula.

In an age of value breakup, declining enrollments, and the need to make difficult value decisions, this publication can be a valuable mathematical tool for those engaged in prioritization efforts, not only as such endeavors pertain to system- and schoolwide goals, but also as they relate to the selection and/or retention of programs and courses of study, and to the selection of subject-matter and classroom instructional objectives. This instrument brings a degree of sophistication to that aspect of curriculum work that is fraught with uncertainty, the perennial quest for adequate responses to the question, "What shall we teach?"

Professor McNeil has made a commendable effort to apply the principles of programmed instruction to the field of curriculum in a way which, to my knowledge, has not been thus far attempted. His selection of content is discriminating, his writing unambiguous, the practice exercises and corresponding answers clearly are relevant to curriculum work, and there is a refreshing lack of pedagogue. Prospective teachers and teachers who have had little or no formal work in curriculum will discover in this work a fine introduction to a number of significant curriculum tasks. In addition, of course, it can be an

excellent source of supplementary reading for advanced students.

**A Practical Guide to Early Childhood Curriculum.** Claudia Fuhrman Eliason and Loa Thomson Jenkins. Saint Louis: The C. V. Mosby Company, 1977. 297 pp.

**Administering Early Childhood Education Programs.** Joseph H. Stevens, Jr., and Edith W. King. Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown and Co., 1976. 331 pp.

**Kindergarten and Early Schooling.** Dorothy H. Cohen and Marguerita Rudolph. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977. 424 pp. —Reviewed by Jimmie L. Battle, Assistant Professor of Education and Coordinator, The Center for Young Children, Virginia State College at Petersburg, Virginia.

From the far west comes a book that is fresh and provocative. The beautiful cover of *A Practical Guide to Early Childhood Curriculum* motivates the reader to immediately examine the contents.

A perusal of the contents reveals 49 well-chosen illustrations that support the authors' descriptive concepts. There are 20 chapters and a limited number of references following each chapter. This book is organized in a logical manner: early childhood education, planning the curriculum, and curriculum areas.

The authors view the development of basic information focused on specific concepts as vital to teaching. Chapters 3 through 15 contain information for teaching those specific concepts. Unit activity plans and related sample lesson plans are included. Chapters 16 through 20 reveal five curriculum areas: "food, science, music, creative arts, and language arts." Orientation, teaching techniques, and specific activities are given for

these areas. Eliason and Jenkins have carefully chosen examples to aid teachers and parents in developing teaching techniques and strategies.

The major strength of this book is its adaptability for use with prospective, beginning, and experienced teachers; parents and grandparents; aides; church leaders; administrators; and others. It is particularly timely as the focus is on quality educational programs for young children wherever they are located. Furthermore, it addresses itself to the theoretical "why" in relation to the question "how." Evaluation is an added dimension. The book could be greatly enhanced with a more inclusive reference list.

Persons with varied educational backgrounds and with little or no administrative training are becoming administrators of programs for young children. *Administering Early Childhood Education Programs* is a text that provides information for such administrators.

Stevens and King view the appeal of the 1960s as a challenge to the professional consciousness of today's early childhood education administrators. They see responsible administrators as advocates for young children and their families, and as leaders, decision makers, resource managers, and curriculum specialists. It is their contention that the "minutia" of paperwork is not the extent of the administrator's responsibility. They identify settings where early childhood administrators may function and list the competencies required to function in those positions. The authors focus on professional issues relevant to administering effective early childhood programs.

The authors provide a concise overview of the historical and philosophical heritage of early childhood education in Chapter 1. An accounting of empirical research is given in Chapter 2, comparing curricula to determine the most effective programs. A strong mandate for programs that reflect ethnic heritage, a multicultural approach,

is proposed in Chapter 4. Teachers and administrators are reminded to "examine their own feelings and perceptions and to present open attitudes about differences." The remaining chapters focus on accountable strategies for early childhood programs, appropriate material selections, parent involvement programs, and parenting education models.

In format, organization, and writing style the book is well designed and highly readable. This does not purport to be a "how-to" book; administrators and potential administrators must recognize it as a valuable text.

*Kindergarten and Early Schooling* is "a revised, updated, and practical overview on curriculum for children of ages four through six." The same impeccable style of writing in *Kindergarten: A Year of Learning* is evidenced in this revised edition. Dorothy H. Cohen and Marguerita Rudolph have combined a developmental interaction approach to learning with specific methods and materials suitable for young children. They bring into focus the theoretical "why" in relation to the "how" of practice.

The authors answer the inevitable question of "What is Kindergarten" by providing a historical overview of the Froebelian era, the emergence and growth of kindergartens in America, reformation era, national focus on young children of the twentieth century, and kindergartens at the crossroads today.

Cohen and Rudolph provide a curriculum structure that is timely and relevant to minorities and "nonsexist education." A projection of the Gestalt theory is seen as the authors construct a curriculum based on the "whole child" concept. Permeating the text is the idea that "a thorough grasp of the theoretical combined with a detailed knowledge of the practical can make a teacher sufficiently creative so she can encourage similar creative living and thinking in children."

Chapter 5 has been rewritten to provide a broader scope and

variety in language learning. Perhaps the most exciting contribution to the revised edition is Chapter 8, "Play in the Curriculum." Play is a term that has been identified with young children for a long time. It is only in recent years that play has found its rightful place in the curriculum for young children. Up-to-date research on block-building, woodworking, and science can be found in the section "Curriculum in Action"—Chapters 10-11. "Exposure to Literature," Chapter 14, rewards the reader with a vast number of research books spanning the areas of the curriculum. A developmental approach prevails as the authors stress selecting books based on knowledge of child growth and development. Criteria for selecting books is included. In each area recent research is included; excellent references are given at the end of each chapter.

Such timely publications as the three reviewed here should have a significant impact on early childhood educational practices.  $\square$

#### Reviewers



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