

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

I am appalled at the article by Victor R. Miller, "The Emergent Patterns of Integration" in the February 1979 issue of *Educational Leadership* [pp. 308-12]. Rarely have I seen such a distorted, one-sided use of research findings to prove a preconceived position on an issue.

Let me be more explicit. Miller does not even draw a distinction between the terms "desegregation" and "integration." Most human rights and civil rights advocates would agree that desegregation involves the physical reassignment of children to schools and/or classrooms. The same experts would generally accept the concept that integration concerns itself with what happens in the way of quality integrated education after the child is so reassigned.

This distinction is a critical one vis-a-vis the article in question, particularly because Miller refers to "forced busing." There is no such thing, and he knows it. Orders by state commissioners and superintendents or by courts often require school districts to provide busing. None have ever required that children take those buses. A wide variety of means of getting children to school, irrespective of distance, are used all of the time in school districts across the land. The term is a red herring and has nothing to do with the issue of quality integrated education. It is used to cloud the issue by advocates of segregation.

I would certainly agree with Miller that quantitative numbers of blacks and whites should not be the sole determinant of whether desegregation or integration has occurred. However, even Miller himself, I presume, would not contend that all-minority or all-white classes are providing quality integrated education or that they could ever be even remotely considered to be desegregated.

Perhaps the issue in this article that is most disturbing is the eclectic approach Miller uses to document the points he is trying to make. He is

highly selective as to which authorities and which documents he quotes. I see no reference to research by authorities such as Pettigrew, Farley, and others whose works disprove the contentions of Miller's basic premise.

He blithely refers to "white flight" as a result of desegregation. If he is not familiar with the research in this area, I know that he is familiar with a limited study done here in New York State and submitted in evidence in a trial in which he testified. It demonstrated originally in 1972 and in replication in 1975 that white flight is occurring about equally in cities with desegregation and those with none at all.

Even when he does quote an authority who would not back up his contentions, he does so by taking a sentence out of context. The Nancy St. John research is a case in point. No one has ever said that integration alone is the sole component of quality education, nor is that the basic thrust of the St. John work.

I am uncertain from what source Miller came to the conclusion that the purpose of school desegregation was ". . . to remedy the low academic achievement of many children. . . ." The issue of academic achievement was not the basis for the 1954 United States Supreme Court decision. Rather, that decision found, in essence, that all children were being deprived of basic human rights in education because of the forced separation of races in our public schools—and that *was* "forced."

I would be particularly interested in knowing which cities have already or are in the process of going bankrupt to pay the costs of desegregation. Such irresponsibility!

I believe that *Educational Leadership* should provide a forum for varying points of view. It is my view that opponents of desegregation, of whom I am not one, should have a platform from which to express their views.

I also believe, however, that *Educational*

Leadership has a responsibility to ascertain that those who write its publications are reputable and knowledgeable.

In a recent court case, Miller's testimony expounded many of the same views and selective contentions as his most recent article. The testimony was discredited. This is a man who has little or no actual experience in desegregation, but based on apparently selective reading, he has become a self-proclaimed expert. A journal of status, prestige, and attention to scholarly works should not, in my judgment, dignify an article of this nature by providing it with a national platform. As a civil libertarian and human rights advocate of long standing, I would not in any way impinge upon the rights of freedom of speech or freedom of press of Miller or of your publication. However, the publication of this article borders on being a threat to equality and democracy in our nation and in our schools.

The major problem is that opponents of real equality and human rights for all will lend an already receptive ear to this kind of fulmination—if for no other reason than that it appears in *Educational Leadership*. Perhaps some of the other very worthwhile articles in the same issue will have greater impact. I hope so.

Morton J. Sobel
Albany, New York

Victor Miller replies:

I will not engage in a colloquy on the comparison of experts except to point out that the studies and research I used were from governmental agencies such as H.E.W. or from universities. Some research was excerpted from periodicals such as the *Indiana Law Journal*, *Phi Delta Kappan*, *Sociology of Education*, *Urban Education*, *The National Center for Educational Research and Development*, and others.

My "expert" status that Sobel finds difficult

to accept was accepted among others by a supreme court judge of New York State, a federal administrative judge for the Department of H.E.W., several boards of education, and a large New York law firm specializing in integration cases.

Sobel is a little less than candid when he suggests there is no such thing as forced busing. He helped develop an integration plan that had children walk over 4.8 miles of suburban highways without sidewalks. The plan specifically said busing was not required. New York State requires busing past two miles. The children formerly attended schools in their neighborhoods.

The realities of white flight are apparent; 13 out of 20 of our largest cities have minority enrollments of 50 percent or more. The cities have run out of whites to integrate. Our children can't wait for metropolitan school districts to clear the hurdle of the legislature and judiciary. The children are here—now—and they pass through each grade once. A careful reading of my article calls for a review of the issues of integration and that such a review should promulgate a new policy of integration that will afford the best educational environment for each child regardless of race or where he/she lives.

I am happy that Sobel believes in free speech for me and is a civil libertarian. From the tenor of his note I was beginning to doubt it.

Dear Editor:

In the January 1979 issue of *Educational Leadership*, Steve Hallmark writes of "The Edu-

Have Something to Say?

If so, write to us. Letters to the editor are usually edited for brevity and are printed only if space is available. Letters must be signed, although we will withhold an author's name if requested.

LETTERS

cational 'State of the Union,' 1979" [pp. 227-32]. I commend him for having the insight and the backbone to call for educators to acknowledge responsibility. I think it is definitely time to admit to ourselves that we have failed in our goals. Most of us have the good intention of helping students to reach their fullest potential, but until we are willing to act instead of complain, education will be at a standstill. I would go one step further. Perhaps we need to redefine the words education and educator. Perhaps we need to look deeper into Roget's *Thesaurus* and into ourselves; perhaps we need to ask, "What is our vocation? What is it that we really want when we say that our children are 'educated'?"

Benjamin Franklin, in 1749, proposed the idea of the academy. In essence, he said that the school should look upon the students as its children. When the students have completed their studies and are ready to enter the world, the school should continue to take interest and see that they succeed whether it be in business, in marriage, office, or in any other area for their advantage.

It might be a good idea to reexamine the history of public education in America. Until, as Hallmark says, we accept responsibility and reexamine our processes, I do not believe education, or the public's view of education, will be any different than the present educational state of the union.

Evelyn R. Levine
Teacher of English/Reading
Fremont High School
Los Angeles, California

Dear Editor:

The introductory statement to Rita Dunn's and Robert Cole's article "Inviting Malpractice Through Mainstreaming" [EL, February 1979, pp. 302-06] stopped me short. The statement is:

"Mainstreaming handicapped students without providing adequately for their special needs is malpractice and may lead to litigation." When are we going to become aware that every student—each one of us—is handicapped and has special needs? Everyone is different from "the average," "does not fit the mold," "is out of step." No matter what it is called, we each have special needs and need to be mainstreamed—but we also need to be encouraged (not just allowed) to swim at our own pace and in our own direction.

James H. Paterson
Life Enrichment
Raymond, Maine

Dear Editor:

I appreciate the well-documented article by Rita Dunn and Robert Cole, "Inviting Malpractice Through Mainstreaming," appearing in *Educational Leadership*, February 1979 [pp. 302-06].

Teacher-attorney Paul L. Tractenberg, however, in his attempt to respond to Dunn and Cole, "perhaps unwittingly," succeeds only in summarizing *his* understanding by writing "... I had considerable difficulty understanding the ultimate thrust of the article by Dunn and Cole . . ." and the remainder of his article of attempted response verifies his opening remarks exactly!

Angela Bruno
Associate Professor of Education
University of Akron
Akron, Ohio

Dear Editor:

In the January issue of *Educational Leadership*, Nancy Reckinger's article titled, "Choice as a Way to Quality Learning" [pp. 255-56], does not include some important facts about the "alter-

(continued on page 568)

Weaknesses

In addition, the HMI's expressed concern over the following weaknesses they observed during their school visits:

1. Academically able children were often assigned work that was not challenging enough for them. In addition, such children were rarely given special, individual attention.

2. There was in general a lack of careful and detailed observation on the part of children as they worked in art, science, and social studies.

LETTERS

(continued from page 536)

native" Horizon High School in Bakersfield, California.

Horizon High School's student body is composed of 160 eleventh- and twelfth-grade students (and two sophomores at present), who chose to opt out of their regular high schools on the basis of wanting a more individualized program. These students are not "disciplinary problems" in the normal sense of the term, but could be categorized as "independent learners" who prefer less structured settings. Furthermore, Horizon High has eight faculty members (nine if you count the principal who teaches on occasion) or a teacher-student ratio of 1:20. Since many students are placed in independent programs, the teacher-student ratio is closer to 1:10 or up to 1:15 for those students who take the regularly scheduled classes.

It seems to me that Reckinger has attempted to make a case for "alternative schools." Maybe we need to ask, "Why aren't we doing the kinds of personalizing of instruction often found in alternative schools in the 'regular schools'?" and then offer alternatives as to how this can be done. If we forget the latter and push for alternative schools, how long will it be before we start seeing articles that focus upon the need for alternatives for the alternative alternatives!

Joseph V. Strunka
Assistant Professor
California State College
Bakersfield

3. The teaching of art was superficial. More in-depth work was said to be needed, with particular attention paid to the mastering of skills and techniques employed in a specific medium.

4. Social studies teaching was largely fragmented, disjointed, and superficial.

5. More three-dimensional work was said to be needed in all areas of the curriculum.

6. Techniques learned in math, such as graphical or diagrammatical forms of presentation, were rarely used in other areas of the curriculum. Indeed, there was little emphasis on the relationship between subjects in general.

7. Children were rarely asked to carry out a writing task that involved presenting coherent arguments, exploring alternatives, drawing conclusions, or making judgments.

8. Children at all ages needed more opportunity to apply what they had learned in math, science, and other areas to everyday, practical situations.

In general, then, we have a mixed bag of results. There seems to be a commitment among England's primary teachers to help children become competent in the basic skills and to become well-behaved, thoughtful, and considerate human beings.

The survey does not reveal a literacy crisis of the sort often alluded to in the British press and media—but neither is it a whitewash or coverup. The weaknesses revealed by the personal observations of skilled observers ought to be of more concern to thoughtful educators and citizens than the comforting test score results.

One can only wonder what an American study of similar scope and methodology would reveal.



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