The Search

Fred Rosenau

Conference

Perhaps you’ve already spotted one of the colorful official posters announcing the White House Conference on Library and Information Services. Theme: “Bringing Information to People.”

The conference, to be held at the Washington Hilton Hotel, November 15-19, will bring together 911 delegates and alternates chosen earlier in 57 states and territories at pre-conferences. (California alone will have 50 delegates, for example.) An additional 1,000 observers should be able to participate at the sessions. This national conference will be structured around five themes: meeting personal needs; enhancing lifelong learning; improving organizations and the professions; effectively governing our society; and increasing international understanding.


RDx

At its July meeting in Washington, DC, the National Council on Educational Research (NCER) reviewed the equity and dissemination activities of the National Institute of Education (NIE) for which it sets policy. Council members received background papers on both topics in preparation for their day-and-a-half discussion of how NIE helps in reducing the gap between research and practice in education.

NIE, of course, operates the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) program as one part of its Dissemination and Improvement of Practice effort. But it also sponsors the Research and Development Exchange (RDx)—a network of regional educational laboratories and a university-based R&D center working to support school improvement efforts.

If you haven’t yet tapped the RDx network, you can find a description of it in Dissemination Networks (1978), distributed by Educational Resource Center, 855 Broadway, Boulder, CO 80302 ($4.50). Or you can write to CEDAR, Inc., Suite 206, 1518 K St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20005 for descriptive materials on RDx and/or a free subscription to Educational R&D Report.

RDx is a collaborative service network composed of R&D producers. It is developing/collating a resource base of R&D products, processes, and knowledge (concentrated mainly on basic skills and competency-based education). Through seven Regional Exchanges, it serves linking agencies employed by state education agencies (SEAs), intermediate service agencies (ISAs), and some local education agencies (LEAs). Ultimate clients, of course, are the students, teachers, and principals working in local school buildings.

A typical RDx information product appeared in 1979—Research Within Reach: A Research-Guided Approach to Concerns of Reading Educators (ERIC ED 162 283). Paperbound copies of this readable report may be obtained free from the nearest Regional Exchange.


One item listed in that NIE catalog is an eight-page brochure on Freestyle, which will give you information on this new career education program aimed at reducing sex-role stereotypes and broadening career possibilities for children of both sexes and all ethnic groups. It consists of 13 dramatic episodes that make up a TV series—plus teacher guide, student magazine, and—for home use—a calendar. The program has been developed for children ages 9-12 and their parents. For the broadcast schedule, off-air recording rights, teacher guide, and student magazine, write Eleanor English, KCET-TV, 4401 Sunset Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90027. For curriculum guides and teacher training materials, write Pat Seeley, Los Angeles County Schools, 9300 E. Imperial Highway, Downey, CA 90242.

Reading

What attributes characterize high-quality reading programs? According to a new handbook, they include:

- Sufficient instruction and activities directed at development of comprehension skills;
- Substantial uninterrupted time for children to read;
- Appropriate emphasis on decoding (often that means less emphasis);
- Recognition of the importance of motivation as a prerequisite for development of reading skills;
- Flexibility in teaching reading—being able to understand such different kinds of materials as books, written forms, instruction sheets, recipes;
- Recognition of reading as one of several means of communication, in combination with speaking, writing, listening;
- Incorporation of reading instruction into other school subjects;
- Letting children put their reading ability to practical use through materials like newspapers, crafts, or sports reading;
- Helping pupils transfer their ability in oral communication into reading and writing fluency.

The 54-page oversize paperback, Handbook for Planning an Effective Reading Program, defines and de-

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scribes specific skills and knowledge areas, suggests questions to pose in planning or assessing a school reading program, and gives examples of activities that will help fulfill program objectives. Developed with funds from the National Institute of Education, it is available at $1.50 per copy from Publications Sales, California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802.

Principles

To what extent does your curriculum reflect any or all of the so-called “guiding principles” enunciated by the National Academy of Education in *The Appropriate Federal Role in Education?* This 1979 publication suggests that “the people of the U.S. have important educational concerns that can and should be expressed by their federal government, and they have social goals that can legitimately be sought through educational-related federal programs.”

Evidently the federal government has legitimate concerns/actions in these areas: (a) Reducing gross disparities in educational opportunity; (b) Providing the nation with a broad view of the purposes and possibilities of education in our society; and (c) Encouraging and promoting the creativity, strength, and diversity of state, local, and private educational institutions.


Teachers’ Center

Ever considered starting your own teachers’ center? Or did the challenge seem too awesome?

Now you can thread your way through the many challenges others have faced successfully by reading *Building a Teachers’ Center* edited by Kathleen Devaney and published by the Teachers’ Centers Exchange. The various essays in this illustrated 292-page paperback cover such topics as philosophy, staffing, what teachers need, evaluation, furnishing a center, programming, workshops, advisors, management, budgets and funding, publishing, developing administrative support, voluntarism, and more.

Order ($9.40 per copy) from your bookseller or Teachers College Press, Columbia University, N. Y. 10027.

Quote

“I do not think special training for women entering leadership positions is necessary. As this training is usually conceived, it assumes that women do not know how to handle power and authority and need to have this deficit ‘fixed up’ in a training program. Anyone observing a mother of a large family directing and organizing would realize that the problem does not lie in an inability to wield power over those who are subordinate and dependent. Leadership training also assumes that there is a set of skills characteristic of organizational leadership which can be learned and transferred across a variety of tasks and situations. The social psychological studies of leadership do not bear out this assumption; leadership appears to be task-specific.”—Elizabeth G. Cohen, Professor of Education and Sociology, Stanford University.

Rural Teaching

The first lesson for revitalizing rural schools is that any effort to improve them must begin in the mold of traditions, values, and beliefs in which the school is set. Rural teachers need to be aware of the many innovations which might enrich their instruction, but their top priority must be to get to know their own community.

That’s not bad advice for any innovator, incidentally. But the quote comes from a modest paperback called *Schooling in Isolated Communities* by Tom Gjelten. Chapter headings include “The Setting,” “The Model,” “The Curriculum,” “Modern Methods,” “Moving Out,” “Switching Places,” “It’s OK to Stay,” “The Teacher,” and “Resources.” Some 104 pages of readable, nonpedagogical prose describe a project located on an island off the Maine Coast. To order, send $3 to North Haven Project, Box 13, Portland, ME 04112.

THE WAY I SEE IT

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the Executive rulemakers who, sometime in the future, will have much to say about the substance of those plans and promises?

I believe it would be highly desirable for the Congress to consider a moratorium on reauthorizations of major educational programs. We need to get away from the syndrome identified by a former U.S. Commissioner of Education in which the Congress routinely pulls programs up by the roots in order to see how they are growing. We need to send clear signals to the people in the field, assuring them—as much as humanly possible—that at least certain central federal aid programs are here to stay. We need to encourage state and local educational leaders to integrate federal aid into their own long-range planning and into their own comprehensive school finance programs.

Only in that way can the dreams of the past and the challenges of the future be merged into a credible present for all who care about the federal aid system in education.