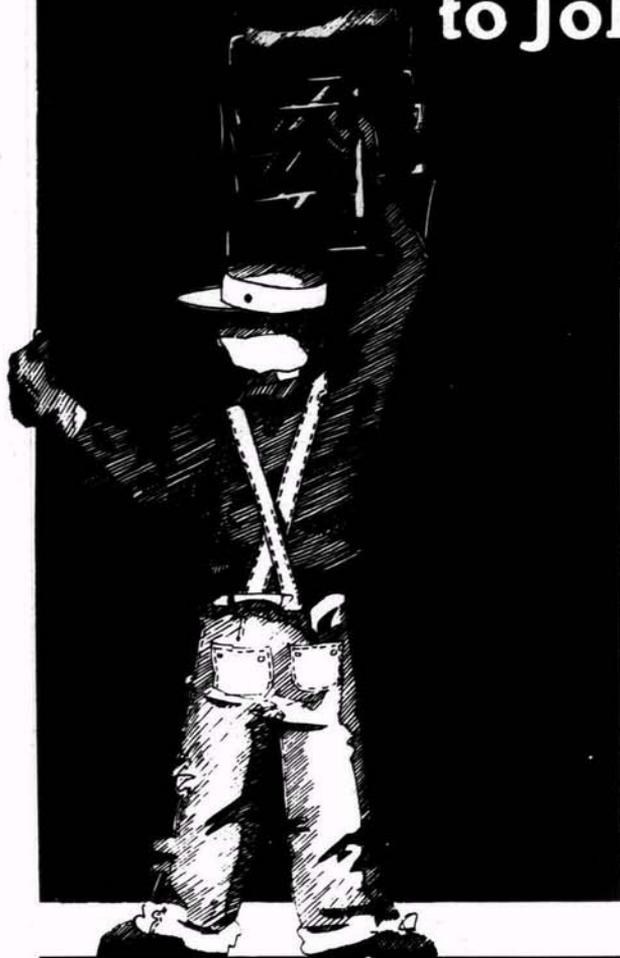


High School Goals: Responses to John Henry Martin



Educators and noneducators comment on John Henry Martin's proposal to narrow the goals of schooling and involve others more fully in the education of adolescents.



by James Howard

I wish there were a different word—a word that bore the solemnity of a behavioral objective or one that rang with the gravity of a Walter Cronkite. The word “literacy” has become a clanging cymbal that means little to those who clang and to those who hear the noise. The clangers all tell us that the condition of American literacy is grave, and we rally to the support of whatever remedy accommodates our educational sensibilities.

Yet of all the responsibilities that belong to school—of all those that might remain if the high schools were relieved of those “educations” John Henry Martin lists—literacy is the chief, the most special. Not “functional literacy” which is calculated for survival. Not “visual literacy,” which is a slogan for something else. Not any but the real thing: the kind that enables people to use language “to construct and follow discursive thought.”¹ Without such literacy no student can become educated. Without it, the intellectual competence Martin identifies as a goal of high school is precluded, and the citizenship he envisions remains a pipe dream.

We have been content so long with the simplistic notion that to be literate is to be able to read and write, however little, that we settle comfortably now

¹The phrase is taken from Richard Mitchell, *Less Than Words Can Say* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1979).

for the achievement by high school seniors of eighth-grade performance. Richard Mitchell puts the matter neatly: "The ability to do some reading and to do some writing is a kind of literacy . . . the very goal of such social disorders as the Plain English Fad and the Minimum Competency Mania."²

Teaching and learning literacy cannot begin and end in elementary school. It has to pervade all the high school years. Neither can responsibility for literacy be left to the subject we call "English." Unless reading and writing become part of the fabric of learning in all subjects, learning will be at best undisciplined; at worst, it will give place to sterile memorization.

Graduation requirements and courses that make it easy for high school students to avoid the hard work of reading and writing will have to go. That means not only most of the "educations" on Martin's list but also the wonderful circumventions that have proliferated as "mini-courses." It means that schools and teachers will have to overcome their addiction to "objective" testing, that homework will have to amount to something. Perhaps above all, teachers themselves will have to be truly literate—men and women who can, and do, read and write.

There is, I'm afraid, no getting around it, no shortcut to it. Literacy—the ability to construct and follow discursive thought—is the condition of intellectual competence. It is also the requirement of citizenship if ours is to be a free society.

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by Alexander Frazier

In the past, full human development as a goal of education was sometimes ridiculed ("the whole child—ha, ha, ha!") or low-rated (physics vs. physi-

cal education). Today would-be reductionists take another tack. How about reassigning noncognitive functions to somebody else? The pressure is still on to achieve greater equity in school learning, and this way of simplifying the task may seem enticing.

Our program could be reduced to center mainly on the literacy skills (a touch of civic education might lighten the load), with emphasis on teaching toward realistic, reachable, minimal standards of achievement. (In fact, some schools seem to be headed that way.) But is this what it takes to achieve genuine equity?

Some of us may think that what all students need is a more challenging curriculum, one that is broader and deeper and altogether richer in opportunities for learning, rather than one that has been cut back and leveled down. An advance in learning competence may seem to us to depend, as does a decent education in general, on the vigorous pursuit of purposes vital to human development in all its valued dimensions.

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by Doreen Poupard

Martin wants to remove the isolation of the high school from other segments of society, but he proceeds to develop a new isolation, that is, intellectual competence narrowly defined to imply "head" learning.

His citizenship component appears tacked on as a way to train youth to be citizens of tomorrow, not as a viable way of life within the school environment itself.

Somewhere along the way one must ask "Is that all there is?" Where are the linkages? The integra-

² *Ibid.*

tion? Is it safe to assume that students will "put it all together" and relate their outside school experiences? Are intellectual competencies as defined by Bloom and planned exercises in "petit government" sufficient? What of the application and utilization of intellectual competence? Where is moral integrity?

In our frustration with being asked to shoulder a "messianic role" will we now shed our "coat of many colors" and refuse to face honestly that we are in the business to facilitate learning for the *student*, not merely his/her head? Where is the "heart" of learning? Don't we have a moral responsibility to teach students that our brains must have compassion? That how, when, and where one uses intellectual competence is just as important as, if not more important than, developing it?

If we subscribe to a need for a clearer focus, then let us not be so eager to make schooling manageable that we bind ourselves to another form of the problem we are attempting to solve. Martin has reminded us that we cannot and need not do everything. Let us clearly understand, however, that isolation can occur in many ways, and while it is useful as a means of concentrated effort, it is not an end in itself. We must respond to the entire human person imbued with a need for and desire to develop moral and ethical standards that facilitate respect and responsibility for self and others. In this way we will not only be providing tools for citizenship, but we will ensure that they are used.

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by **Gordon I. Swanson**

American society leads all others in the volume as well as in the fury of its literature of complaint about education. John Martin's article and this response add more to this literature.

Martin argues that schools are attempting to do too much, an argument which he will easily win. Few would disagree, particularly if it is necessary to sustain the premise that classrooms, laboratories, and shops must be locked and unavailable for instruction for three months out of each year. The school day may be too long, but much of the school year is still wasted. He also argues that schools should not succumb to the temptation to become elitist. Here again it is easy to agree. But it is necessary to entertain the suspicion that his solution is one that leads directly, and perhaps preferentially, to elitism.

It is necessary to doubt Martin's assertion about the impact of the 1913 Report of the Commission on Secondary Education of the NEA. How can anyone believe that the schools have been subservient to the dominance of this report for 65 years? Over this period many forces have been at work to change the curricula of schools. It shouldn't be necessary to remind educators that this was the time span in which there was an end to child labor; workers were given the right to organize and bargain; women were enfranchised; vocational education emerged with growing support from every level of governance; and civil rights became available to categories of Americans who had not previously known them. The overused phrase, a learning society, began to emerge as a reality. The most important lesson learned by citizens was that democracy is a journey, not a destination. Americans insisted that the journey go *through* schools, not *around* them. Educators were not the fastest learners; the lesson seemed very difficult for them. Indeed, there were very few who were in the forefront leading the way. The schools, America's workshops for democracy, had begun to appear as the outposts of resistance.

And what does Martin recommend as a solution to an overfilled curriculum? He recommends that educators ("we" is his pronoun) take an activist role in creating a dumping ground—for problems as well as for students. The dumping ground should be the community because, he argues, (a) it will increase the opportunities for youth to work with older adults, and (b) the community can offer more quality and efficiency to the educational experiences.

But the school should be selective in deciding what not to dump. The school, according to Martin, should retain its lesson-giving role in speaking, writing, reading, science, and mathematics. Why? Have schools distinguished themselves by the excellence they have demonstrated in these areas? Why not give the community a try at these too? They should be retained in the school, argues Martin, because of "historical precedence" and "common sense." Besides, he continues, "these subjects are the school's special responsibility in order to build "intellectual

competence in a free society." The obvious implication is that the part of the curriculum dumped on the community has little, or at least less, to do with intellectual competence or the guarantees of freedom. Why is it so difficult for so many to accept the fact that academic disciplines and school subjects are, after all, only canonical ways of describing a piece of the world's reality? Why is it so difficult to understand that the world's reality need not be wrapped up in tradition or historical precedence?

One wonders whether Martin might be too willing to substitute historical precedence for common sense. His proposed solutions appear very close to the seventeenth century teachings of John Locke (later dispelled by the research of E. L. Thorndike) in which he tried to demonstrate that certain subjects had special utility for training the mind. His argument remains, nevertheless, as a popular plea for reducing the crowded nature of the curriculum, and it has the advantage of being very antiseptic—it separates the school from many of society's problems that surround the school.

I return to the concept of the dumping ground. Indeed, students are dumped in greater numbers than school leaders are willing to acknowledge. Martin's reported figure of 95 percent of the adolescent population being served by the school is erroneous. There is no accurate data on the number of students who drop out before completing high school. The best estimate, according to the U.S. Commissioner of Education, is about 25 percent. Most are among the disadvantaged, and many are unemployed. Worse, the drop-out rate has started to increase.

Where are they? More than half of those involved in voluntary military service have never completed high school. More than half of those enrolled in Job Corps Centers are not high school graduates. Almost half of the Title I participants in the activities of the Comprehensive Employment Act (CETA) are non-high school graduates. All of these are community agencies that attempt to rescue the casualties of the school and operate to disguise the inadequacies of the system that produces the casualties.

As a person identified with the field of vocational education, I cannot fail to notice that Martin would find a dumping ground for all or most of it. Martin would be pleased to know that a growing number of vocational educators would not object to having vocational education removed from traditional high schools. But they would agree for an unfortunate reason, namely, that the school appears to be an increasingly inhospitable place for providing it.

America is the only large industrial country in the world that still relies almost wholly on a system of general education as preparation for the work force. No more than 10 percent of potential secondary

level students ever complete a vocational program. Transition from school to work continues to be a major national problem along with low worker productivity and a shortage of individuals with technical skills. Unfortunately it is quite possible that America is on its way toward what John Dewey abhorred the most, a dual education system—one preparing individuals for the world of work and the other avoiding any such responsibility.

The nation's reliance on its school system is certainly a credit to the noblest aspirations of its citizens. But the illusion that the nation and its schools could confront discrimination, migration, human rights, and vocational education without disrupting the comfortable detachment of traditional schooling was naive.

The solution is not to treat schools as the enemies of the people. It is not to invest schools with the responsibility to limit or to stratify the avenues for generating intellectual competence in a free society. Public education is most in need of a renaissance of leadership, a rebirth that rewards the capacity to match the complexity of problem solutions to the complexity of the problems themselves. If educators are willing to accept the solutions recommended by Martin, public schools may sooner or later become what Fred Hechinger has called "the graveyard of the American dream."¹

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by Veronica H. Zepeda

One sentence from John Henry Martin's article continuously flashes in my mind as an especially appropriate warning signal: "To change abstraction into a compendium of the trivial is a danger that we have seen come to pass, largely because Benjamin Bloom's

¹ Fred M. Hechinger, "Schoolyard Blues—The Decline of Public Education," *Saturday Review*, January 20, 1979, p. 22.

Taxonomies have been neglected." I applaud that statement.

Arizona's Continuous Uniform Evaluation System (CUES), mandated by the state legislature in 1972, is designed to monitor the continuous progress of an individual. It is very much in keeping with ASCD's statement approved at the Annual Conference in Detroit in March opposing statewide minimum competency testing but favoring competency-based education.

Although monitoring the continuous progress of a student K-12 is limited to "basic subjects"—reading, writing, and computation skills—a district can choose to monitor continuous progress in other areas and, indeed, some have chosen to do so.

Two components of CUES direct the district to develop and implement "... an evaluation system of pupil achievements in relation to measurable performance objectives. . . ." Although the law in no way dictates what those objectives will be or how they will be evaluated, district objectives tend to hover at the lower levels of the *Taxonomies* and are measured by some form of paper and pencil testing. In some instances CUES is "a compendium of the trivial." But we educators control that. If application, synthesis, valuing, and judgment are important to us, we can help students learn them.

There are many things educators cannot be accountable for, including domestic problems, socioeconomic status of the family, primary home language, inflation, and so on, but we can make sure that thinking is part of any and all basic subjects, however a state chooses to define them.

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by Elizabeth C. Yancey

For almost 17 days during the spring of 1979, students in a major urban city were without school

teachers, regular class assignments, or feedback on their progress. But some of them went on learning just the same.

The scene was Washington, D.C., the nation's capital, where teachers were engaged in a work stoppage for a period of 17 school days. What does a teachers' strike have to do with the aims of high schools? In this instance quite a lot, because for the students who attended the School Without Walls, Randall's Aerospace-Marine Science Program, the Experience-Based Career Education Program, and other similar programs, schooling continued in spite of the absence of the regularly scheduled classroom forums. Those who studied with practitioners at the National Zoo, the Corcoran Art Gallery, Walter Reed Hospital, the United States Senate, or on the Lightship Chesapeake were not affected as were those enrolled in conventional high school classes.

Each of these programs uses the city-as-a-classroom concept and offers learning opportunities in real-life settings for highly motivated, independent students. This interaction between community, staff, and students provides a stimulating setting for intellectual growth and citizenship in a free society.

Young people are increasingly recognizing that the formalized school program does not represent the boundaries for learning. They know that all learning does not take place within the confines of a school. Each program continues to grow and attract more students. When the school teachers had an agenda which they felt they had to support by leaving their classrooms, these students made independent decisions to continue their schooling. They considered their school teachers, but at the same time recognized their responsibility to their community teachers who were not on strike.

Charity James in *Young Lives at Stake* says, "Schools as institutions set apart from the rest of the community may well wither away, as adults gain greater freedom to continue in processes of learning and relearning for playful as well as work-based reasons."¹ The link between school and the community is inevitable for schools to survive. The purpose of high school education must continually evolve to meet the needs of our youth and the reflections of our society.

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¹ Charity James, *Young Lives at Stake* (New York: Agathon Press, Inc., 1972).



by Patricia Albjerg Graham

Literacy for all students should be the principal aim of high school education today. By literacy I mean the ability to read, communicate, compute, develop independent judgments, and take actions resulting from them. That is more than "back to basics"; that is "forward to complexities."

Most young people are now able to read and compute, but many of them are unable to make inferences from what they read or to apply arithmetic procedures to mathematical problems. Without such skills they will find it difficult to communicate either verbally or in writing. Such a limitation will make it extraordinarily hard for them to assimilate new ideas, judge their worth, and act decisively as a result of that new information.

There are other skills and values besides literacy that the young should learn. Fortunately there are also many other circumstances in which the young are educated besides the school. The school, however, is the only publicly supported agency specifically intended for education. Its mandate, therefore, must be to instill those fundamental skills in all its pupils. At the elementary level those skills are the basics; at the high school level they are the complex ones. We know much more about successful instruction in the former than we do about the latter.

In our dilemma about how to instill the complex skills of literacy, we are tempted to turn our attention at the high school to other worthy activities, such as prevention of teen-age pregnancy or instruction in good nutrition. Both of these are laudable endeavors, but they and others like them should not be allowed to become the focus of school activities. Literacy must come first for the school. The school should not be deterred from that pursuit, however tempting or important the alternatives may appear.

Many people today are concerned about the per-

ceived loss of public confidence in the schools, and their concern is legitimate. If school leaders could assure the public that a high school graduate could write a clear, grammatical letter, could follow either printed or oral instructions, could apply knowledge of percents and fractions accurately, then I believe that public confidence in the schools would be substantially restored. The schools have accepted many other responsibilities, and in the plethora of other obligations sometimes the fundamental task to make students literate has been lost. To make 80 percent of the 18-year-olds—the current proportion of the age group that graduates from high school—literate is much more difficult than it was to make 50 percent of them literate, the task of the high schools 35 years ago. High school leaders need the support of their communities in this crucial undertaking.

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by Ralph W. Tyler

Martin's paper is a helpful reminder that schools should focus major energy on the tasks for which they were founded. However, without sacrificing this emphasis, many high schools are aiding students to make a constructive transition from childhood to adulthood.

The decreasing opportunities outside of school for American youth to learn to assume adult responsibilities and to work effectively with adults led to the establishment in 1965 of the National Commission on Resources for Youth under the leadership of Judge Mary C. Kohler, formerly in the San Francisco Family Court. The mission of the commission is to find and disseminate information about successful programs that involve youth participation in activities that are

valued by the adult community, programs in which young people take major responsibility for their actions and reap the consequences of their efforts.

In the 14 years since the commission's founding, it has identified several thousand such programs including a surprisingly large variety of activities such as tutoring children having difficulty in learning; providing services in day-care centers, retirement homes, and community mental health centers; developing a community historical museum; interviewing senior citizens to produce oral histories; monitoring air and water pollution; and organizing campaigns to get public support for youth centers. These have been documented and filed. From the files, reports have been disseminated through newsletters and a book entitled *New Roles for Youth*.

The reports furnish many stimulating ideas for laboratory and field experiences in high school subjects—biology, English, social studies, physics, chemistry, home economics, and others. Programs of youth participation can be designed both to relate academic subjects to significant activities in the community and also to furnish opportunities to learn to work constructively with adults and assume adult responsibilities.

A related kind of educational contribution of the high school includes what students learn through participating in the school community itself. In this respect American high schools have been amazingly successful. In 1975, 1,000 adults—a national probability sample drawn from the Project Talent high school students of 1960—were interviewed at length to obtain their views of their high school experiences. The most important thing they had learned, reported by 80 percent, was how to relate constructively with other students. They found the high school the best example of a democratic community they had experienced. In most of the schools, the adults and students respected one another and cared about one another's welfare. This contribution is very important. Giving greater emphasis to the academic curriculum should not be done at the expense of the democratic nature of the school community. Fortunately, studies of cooperation in school classrooms indicate that a friendly, cooperative classroom is more effective for learning than a competitive one.

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by Hazel Taylor Spitze

While I agree with much of what Martin says, especially the idea of "a comprehensive program of community-based education" and his statement that "at least two major goals of the high school [should be] intellectual competence and citizenship in a free society," I wonder if we need to revise the way we teach in high school rather than its aims.

If we are to develop the intellectual skills of reading, writing, listening, evaluating media messages, reasoning, analyzing, deriving conclusions, applying knowledge, using evidence in making judgments, synthesizing information from a variety of resources, and the like, we need *practice* in all of these skills. None of these things occur in the abstract. If we are learning to read, we read about something, and that something can involve us in all subject matters and relate to all problems.

I believe that home economics—the field of study that has as its focus the family and draws on the disciplines of chemistry, economics, biology, art, psychology, and others for knowledge with which to solve family problems—is as basic to the general development of high school students as any subject Martin mentioned. The study of home economics in high school can, if taught well, illuminate the study of math and the sciences and enhance preparation for citizenship, because it will show students the relationships of these studies to their daily lives. I think this is true for all students; it may be especially true for some who fail to see math as "an elegant elevation of the brain and a source of great joy." Math can be this *if taught well*, at least for some, but not for all, perhaps not even for a majority; and our society is now committed to secondary education for everyone.

The family is the basic unit of society, as well as the central focus of home economics, and what happens there affects each person's ability to think, analyze, synthesize, apply knowledge, make judg-



ments, and all the rest. My argument is that the study of the family can be the vehicle for developing these intellectual skills and for learning to become an enlightened citizen in a free society.

If home economics is taught in a manner that enables students to learn these relationships, gives them practice in group functioning and discussion, shows them how to participate in decisions and to allow others to do so, and deals with content and problems they see as relevant to their own lives, then it will contribute to the aims Martin sees as top priorities for the high school. Those who think of home economics as cooking and sewing will find this difficult to understand, I am sure. That idea (home economics is cooking and sewing) is not just obsolete; it was not even in the minds of the *founders* who in 1900 said that:

Home economics in its most comprehensive sense is the study of the laws, conditions, principles and ideals which are concerned on the one hand with man's immediate physical environment and on the other hand with his nature as a social being, and is the study especially of the relation between these two factors.¹

Any subject area can be taught in a dull manner with no student participation beyond note taking and memorizing, and when it is, even math and science will fail to develop the mind and to create good citizens.

Home economics is rich in content, such as family relationships and resource management, that provides reasons to think, problems to solve, judgments to make, and understandings to master.

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by Elizabeth Vallance

My reactions to Martin's paper are oddly colored by thoughts about graduate school. A curious (if

tenuous) analogy between high school and graduate school may be worth the limited space allowed here. Another paper, perhaps, should address the hidden-curriculum implications of Martin's remarks, but they are too intricate to cover in a brief space.

The graduate school analogy is not as far-fetched as it might seem. Courses of graduate study, like high school curricula, have proliferated in the last several decades. Both high school and graduate school build on the preceding levels, which (presumably) provide the intellectual skills applicable to a variety of disciplines. Most significantly, both high school and graduate school provide the last opportunity for formal study that some of their members will have. Granted, people go to college in droves from high school, and many products of graduate schools spend their lives in highly structured learning programs of their own making. But high school is the last required such experience, and graduate school is usually considered terminal. The aims of each are worth considering in the context that Martin implies, namely the appropriateness of proliferating courses to meet diverse practical needs. I was trained in a theoretically-oriented graduate program, and I teach a "theory and practice" course in a practically-oriented one, so the question is salient for me. My graduate students last year wanted recipes, not general training in theory-building. I disagreed, and they survived. So, what is the best use of this luxurious last chance to prepare for the frenzy that follows?

The question is hardly new, but it can be argued that theoretical tools are acquirable only with difficulty in the practical world, if only because most of our jobs do not allow time for such reflection, and that many practical skills can be acquired on the job. The question becomes: What should graduate school or high school provide that we can't be sure the student will learn later, somehow? My graduate students will, perforce, learn most of the practical ropes of administering continuing education programs in their own unique job settings. Likewise, nothing will stop a kid who wants to learn to drive from finding appropriate resources and taking the test. Given that we value intellectual competence (and assuming high school or graduate school can teach it), isn't it kind of a shame not to develop conceptual and communication skills while we still have the chance (and the time and the sanction) to do so?

Martin's "revision" of the aims of high school is provocative. I liked his paper. I don't fully agree with it (isn't "community-based education" as loose a rubric as "lifelong learning" and as difficult to plan around?), but his points are apt. The high-school

¹ Home Economics Education Association, *Proceedings of the First Lake Placid Conference* (Lake Placid, New York: n.p., 1899), pp. 19-25.

curriculum has sprawled; it has taken the indisputable long-term goals of education—the development of citizens who are moral, healthy, safe, consuming, familial, sexually responsible, and good at their careers—and shaped its explicit teaching in those terms. Whether this hard-hitting, goal-oriented education works any better than the famously amorphous education Henry Adams received remains to be seen; there is a kind of desperation to the notion that we can deliberately teach morality. Martin senses this and recognizes that some of the responsibilities the school has lately assumed could profitably be relegated to the community whence they came.

In light of this, I am puzzled by one of his “revised aims.” The emphasis on “citizenship in a free society” is puzzling, not because it is inappropriate, but because it is inconsistent with his prior arguments. Surely citizenship education is not unrelated to “global education,” consumer education, moral and ethical education, and those other topics whose inclusion in the curriculum he decries. On what basis has he favored citizenship education? He doesn’t say, but he brings us full circle, back to the explicit goals of the early public school—basic skills and the creation of a unified American populace. Perhaps we are reluctant to release our hold on the hidden curriculum, even once it has been revealed.

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by Sidney P. Marland, Jr.

I remain an earnest admirer of John Henry Martin as a lucid writer and a competent critic of American education. I concur with most of his amended aims and their elucidation.

But in brusquely setting aside the Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, he takes some liberties against which I would argue. Granting some flaws of inexactness such as “worthy home membership,” I find these 70-year-old ideals still sound, albeit unrealized fully in our schools.

While some of the principles are cited for illustrations of obsolescence, he chooses not even to mention the principle concerned with occupational development. As he addresses the role of the contemporary high school he mentions career education only as one example of a *potpourri* of proliferating courses, seemingly undeserving of serious attention among his aims.

Martin’s new aims and those in the Seven Cardinal Principles are not the only efforts to point directions for our secondary schools. The Education Policies Commission, on which Martin and I both have sat, published in 1952 the *Imperative Educational Needs of Youth*, which listed ten aims. And, lo, the first of the ten was the following:

All youth need to develop salable skills and those understandings and attitudes that make the worker an intelligent and productive participant in economic life. To this end most youth need supervised work experience as well as education in the skills and knowledge of their occupations.

While career education, as now conceptualized in law and practice, is considerably less didactic than the Education Policies Commission’s *imperative*, the fact remains that education and work are coming closer together in most high schools, under whatever terminology. To ignore this is to ignore history and to ignore the declared interests and concerns of parents and young people.

My respect for John Henry Martin is undiminished and, as always, I find enlightenment in debate with him. May he, too, find enlightenment.

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by Louise M. Berman

We live in a “versus” society. Persons commonly talk about labor versus management, parents versus

children, faculty versus administrators, and community versus school. Inadvertently adversarial rather than collaborative relationships frequently emerge. In a sense the adversarial posture is highlighted because of recent attention to a necessary "good" within a democratic society—the *rights* of all individuals and groups. By recognizing the necessity to incorporate the disenfranchised members of the society into the "mainstream," we have allowed ourselves to engage in either-or kinds of thinking. Corporate thinking, feeling, and acting is dissipated.

The time is *now* to engage in more integrative kinds of thinking as we consider the role of the school in educating all youth. Thus I would propose that the role of the school is to teach ethical thinking and decision making. The school can perform this function well only if it has close collaborative relationships with other agencies in the community, including families, religious institutions, industries, and service agencies. Ethics is derived from the same root word as custom, abode, or dwelling;¹ thus ethics involves dwelling together so that all constantly search how to live fully, richly, morally, and interdependently.

Although Martin writes about the full and rewarding experiences that an individual can have in the community, he does not seem to build an adequate bridge between the experiential components the community can provide and the peculiar role of the school if education is seen to be a collaborative process designed to enhance the lives of all persons. In other words, the school cannot merely relegate certain critical functions to other agencies, but rather must plan cooperatively with them so that students achieve at high levels necessary to ethical thinking and decision making.

What kinds of experiences must be provided for students if ethical thinking and decision making is accepted as the major goal of the school? Who provides the experiences?

1. The student must have opportunity for immersion in situations from which the individual can learn how to think, value, and act intelligently. Experiences may be in a variety of settings. The settings, however, should be such that they are convincing, involving, question-raising, and conflict-evoking. In other words in selecting settings, attention should be given to the avoidance of blandness and to the possibilities of evoking strong human feeling. Schools need to work collaboratively with the community on this phase, but the community assumes major responsibility.

2. The student must be able to describe and clarify what happened in the selected situations. Here the function of the school is to provide an environment where issues can be clarified, where feelings can be

aired, and where the student can get a feeling of who he/she is in relationship to what was experienced in the planned or selected setting.

3. The student must consider alternative ways of thinking and behaving within the given situation. Again the school should assume responsibility for this dimension through appropriate readings and other experiences designed to give a broadened perspective to the situation.

4. Lastly the student should try to arrive at the most appropriate ethical behavior within the situation. The school's responsibility is to assist the student in clarifying his/her own value bases as prerequisite to deciding the most appropriate course of action. In this process every communication and thinking process is called into play.

Yes, as Martin has indicated, the school should teach critical thinking and citizenship. However, schools need to do more. In order to teach collaborative processes in an age in which interdependence is the order of the day, schools must exhibit cooperative planning and action with community agencies in order that students may learn to make ethical decisions.

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by Clifford T. Bennett

I agree with Martin that an effective citizenship education program requires recognition of the interaction of numerous institutions: radio and television, summer camps, benevolent societies, museums, settlement houses, factories, churches and synagogues, and

¹For further discussion of this point, see Cornelis Verhoeven, *The Philosophy of Wonder: An Introduction and Incitement to Philosophy*, trans. Mary Foran (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), p. 140.

the printed media. But is he aware that defining social studies has been a perennial problem for social studies educators?

Contrasting definitions of citizenship education have led to conflict, confusion, and competing claims regarding purposes, methods, and content. Advocates of social studies taught as citizenship transmission stress a conservative and traditional philosophy. They assume that transmission of the American heritage is the basis for citizenship. Proponents of the social sciences believe that teaching the knowledge and thinking patterns of the social science disciplines is the function of citizenship education. Finally, there are the advocates of reflective inquiry, those who say societal problems should be studied using critical thinking, problem solving, and inductive teaching.¹ These disagreements in philosophy have led to diffusion and weakness in instruction in our nation's high schools.

Research indicates that high school social studies has little independent effect on the political attitudes of students. Classroom climate, a participatory school milieu, and exposure to controversial issues in an atmosphere characterized by inquiry and openmindedness are more effective than mere transmission of political knowledge.

Educators in leadership and policy positions should reexamine the goals of high school in face of public disenchantment with education and its graduates. There is strong interest in high schools and what they are doing, interest which may yet result in reformulated aims.

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by Norman Cousins

The development of human potentiality is and always will be the prime purpose of education. John

Dewey's way of saying it was that the fully educated person is one who has come into full possession of his/her powers.

In the 1920s, it was possible to define broad philosophical purposes for education, and then to make progress in those directions through curricular and pedagogical approaches. Today, however, the formulation and pursuit of pedagogical goals tend to be stymied by forces beyond the jurisdiction of the school. Specifically, one of the primary influences in the learning process is television, with its pictorial dimension and dramatic license.

It is difficult to think of any individual who is properly educated who does not also have a highly developed respect for life and for human sensitivities. Yet an average of six hours is spent each day in close proximity to mindless brutality on television. The teacher is expected not only to instruct, but also to counteract all the violent and desensitizing images that pass electronically into a child's mind.

The argument is made, of course, that children make the appropriate allowances for fantasy and that there is very little spillover into the functional intelligence. What this argument misses is that there is a profound gravitational pull in the wrong direction. Children develop casual attitudes toward violence even as they exercise their TV fantasies. The natural acts or manifestations of civility, tenderness, compassion, and selfless courage that are essential to everyday life are shallowly portrayed or left out altogether.

The more we learn about the human mind, the more we must stand in awe of its seemingly limitless storage capacity, of its individualized selection and retrieval patterns, and of the unpredictable short-circuitings that occur in a desensitizing, dehumanizing environment. We only kid ourselves when we minimize the impact of television violence on young viewers.

It is necessary, of course, to continue to articulate and pursue educational aspirations, but perhaps the first order of business at the present time is to find ways to reduce the damage being done by countering counter-educational forces. The schools cannot expect to make as much headway as they should so long as children learn from the powerful persuader in the fancy box that life's complexities are not to be coped with rationally, or that the way to deal with persons, groups, or peoples with whom we disagree is to batter them or to counter violence with superior violence.

• Norman Cousins is Chairman of the Editorial Board of Saturday Review.

¹ Robert D. Barr, James L. Barh, and S. Samuel Shermis, *The Nature of the Social Studies* (Palm Springs, California: ETC Publications, 1978).



by Diane Ravitch

John Henry Martin's analysis and proposal deserve the thoughtful consideration of everyone who is concerned about secondary education. He is lucid and persuasive in his critique of the fallacy that schools can do everything (Robert Hutchins called it "the omnibus fallacy of education"), and he appropriately identifies the Seven Cardinal Principles as the ideological foundation for practitioners of the omnibus fallacy. (Those who are interested in an account with a similar perspective should read Richard Hofstadter's *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*).¹

Martin is right when he says that too much is expected of schools and that schools are not well-suited to accomplish all they are asked to do. He correctly observes that schools are part of a network of educating institutions; they can't successfully take the place of the other institutions. Schools work best when the other agencies of a community are effective. When families, religious institutions, and social agencies flounder, schools are in trouble too.

Yet every perceived social problem, every freshly-discovered social trend, deposits a new course or curriculum in the schools, because of the tenacious belief that schools can and should do everything. And every addition creates new problems, not least of which is the time that is taken away from the teaching of history, literature, science, mathematics, and other basic areas of knowledge. When, in the wake of Watergate, the public was aroused by the decline in public ethics, the cry went up that schools must teach courses about values; to avoid a clash about whose values are to be taught, many such courses teach moral relativism, which offends almost everyone. When the news magazines discovered the "sexual revolution," courses in sex education burgeoned; inevitably there have been complaints that these courses

have been used as a political platform by sexual interest groups seeking converts, that they have invaded the basic values of the family, and that they have stimulated youthful sexual activity and out-of-wedlock births. And, it is by now traditional to point out that vocational education courses are usually taught by people who are certified teachers, rather than practitioners in their vocation, and that students are often trained with obsolete equipment.

Martin wisely recognizes that a large part of the reason for the mushrooming of the school's role has been its eagerness to meet every need, whether or not it had the resources or knowledge to succeed.

I find it impossible to disagree with his outlook, though I see difficulties in implementation of his programs. Problem one is inertia; people will tend to continue doing what they have been doing in the way they have done it in the past. A second, equally serious, problem is that not every community has a sufficiently rich range of nonschool agencies to do what Martin projects. Furthermore, many agencies will be reluctant to make room for student interns. Third is the question of whether all such nonschool experiences are educative and whether it will be possible to create enough internships that are carefully planned, supervised, and evaluated. Fourth, any effort to relate public schools to religious organizations is certain to provoke court challenges to the constitutionality of such arrangements. Fifth, no matter how much the schools try to decentralize programs and functions, many of them cannot be entirely eliminated. Courses in "values" may be dropped, but the schools will continue to be involved in the development of character through internal rules and standards of student behavior. Though education for occupations may be coordinated with social agencies and places of employment, many schools have found that students can be motivated by appealing to their career interests.

Yet I do not wish to sound unduly pessimistic because I agree strongly with the essence of Martin's proposal. The schools must concentrate on doing well that which they are fitted to do best. The schools are the *only* community agency in which young people may gain a liberal education, an education that emphasizes intellectual growth and that prepares students to assume the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a free society. Even if nothing else were to change, the reordering of the schools' priorities would itself constitute an important reform in secondary education.

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¹ Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (Westminster, Md.: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1963).



by Jonathan T. Howe

Sometimes I feel that the more progress we make, the more we stand still. As John Henry Martin points out, high school education has been dominated during the twentieth century by an insatiable desire to broaden the curriculum.

In 1954, with the decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, our nation began to use the schools to correct societal wrongs. This judicial inroad into education has had perhaps more of a dramatic impact than we realize. Not only is it assumed that schools can reform all of society's ills, as Martin suggests, but schools have become the instrumentality, in the eyes of the courts, to do this almost to the exclusion of any other social agency.

One cannot quarrel with Martin's premise that

there has been a proliferation of courses and programs. It appears that the schools have become the collective dustbin for ideas and programs that others will not assume responsibility for. I am afraid, however, that creating new community agencies, as Martin suggests, is not going to achieve the desired result.

New agencies, seemingly hydraheaded, keep coming forward trying to supplant educational goals established by local boards of education, and when they fail, they excoriate public education without looking at their own inadequacies. One need only look at the recent CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) programs. As these programs have failed in many areas of the country, schools have been given the major blame.

Martin realistically suggests that interagency cooperation will be difficult to achieve. But the creation of new agencies can only lead to further jealousies and problems.

It would appear that in some respects Martin is guilty of his own "crime" by asking the schools to develop new programs to replace the plethora of present programs that he abhors. Nevertheless, he offers good food for thought.

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