

Letters

ACCLAIM FOR THE ISSUE ON EQUITY

You, your staff, and the contributors to the January issue of *Educational Leadership* are to be commended! The assessment of our schools as presented makes me feel pretty good about what I am doing. Of particular interest were those articles dealing with early and compensatory education. The bibliographies should be an excellent source for those in decision-making positions.

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REDUCING PREJUDICE

Glenn Pate's article on prejudice reduction [January 1981] should be required reading for teachers and administrators in urban and suburban schools. One wonders how much time has been wasted in trying to reduce prejudice simply by supplying information about other groups. A one-day workshop on desegregation procedures where teachers sit in passive observation leaves much to be desired. With carefully planned objectives and cooperation between educators and parents, programs can be developed which provide positive results.

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EQUITY IN CUTS

I read the January articles [Assessment of Equity] and, in general, agreed with most of what was written. As an educator, I believe that we should strive to equalize conditions for everyone in the United States.

Unfortunately, the taxpayers in several states are looking at personal priorities. In Massachusetts, where the real estate tax has borne the burden of financing almost all local expenses, the taxpayers in November voted to limit those taxes to 2½ percent of assessed valuation.

Since federal and state laws mandate but do not completely support many programs, school committees must look elsewhere in the budget to make cuts. My own social studies department is scheduled to lose nine teachers and its entire book budget for 1981-82. I am less than happy to learn that all social studies classes must exceed 15 pupils while most of the programs you discuss cannot touch that number. I had to wipe out a 12-student anthropology class, all seniors, while an ESL class functions with 3 students.

The taxpayers are speaking. They are telling us to establish priorities. Our desires list must be reduced to an absolute needs minimum. After 29 years in the social studies department, my bias is too great to legitimately partake in the decision-making process. How and who will make the decisions on which traditional school programs to retain and which of the newer needs in education to fund? The answer to that question may be the key to education in the 21st century.

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WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS

May I remind the three female authors of the article, "Why Women are Underrepresented in Educational Administration" [January 1981] that in order for women to implement the three behavior changes which will increase the number of qualified, aspiring women administrators, attitude change is required? It is possible that the attitude change required by the male gatekeepers may be less than that required by women who must perceive that by gender alone they are just as able to obtain the appropriate credentials, apply for positions, and encourage others of their sex to enter leadership positions.

The responsibility for both the behavior and attitude change should rest with people of both sexes or are the authors stereotyping that the female is better able to adjust and change than is the male.

The article highlighted significant factors related to the dearth of women in

educational administration, but I disagreed with the solution offered. May I offer an alternative? Education leaders, dedicate yourselves to encouraging and finding the best people you can for administrative positions. If that attitude prevails, the number of women in such positions will increase.

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RESPONSE OR DIRECTION?

The report by Koeller and Thompson [May 1980] on planning models used by successful teachers reminded me of a quote attributed to Piaget: "You would not have searched for me had you not found me."

Teachers, in the Koeller and Thompson study, were directed to: "List the planning decisions you make as you prepare a lesson. List your planning steps in the order in which you actually make them." The authors state: "We found it remarkably easy to classify responses as Tyler, Macdonald, or Taba."

Does the study reveal the planning models used by teachers? I have some doubts. First, the data represent the re-creation of events by teachers. Second, the directions predispose teachers to perceive their planning as a set of discrete linear decisions. Hence, the possibility of cyclical, interactive, and/or simultaneous decisions is repressed.

Which brings me back to Piaget. If we wish to place teacher planning into one of three established models, we direct teachers to respond accordingly. Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the responses are easily classified.

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FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Nancy Naron's attempt to justify full-day kindergarten [January 1981] is not convincing. She builds a large part of her case around research evidence com-

paring the academic effects of half-day and full-day programs, but as she points out, the conclusions of such studies are mixed and cannot currently be argued on empirical grounds. Furthermore, she fails to address the question of whether we even ought to support "highly-structured, cognitive-oriented" programs as a focus of early childhood education.

She comes closer to the real issue in citing the political reasons which are used to justify full-day programs (increased state aid, parental convenience, decreased transportation costs, declining enrollment). Add also that full-day programs create teacher jobs.

The crucial issue in deciding educational questions ought to be whether a particular arrangement is "good and appropriate" for a particular group of learners. The fact that children can adjust to the full-day program does not necessarily mean it is good for them. Nor does the endorsement of five professional associations, parents, and teachers make it good.

Naron's article might more appropriately be concluded by noting that full-day kindergarten involves shaping the child to fit the school, not the reverse.

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PREJUDICE REDUCTION FOR THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD

As Chief of Social Actions for the Air National Guard, I request authorization to reprint "Research on Prejudice Reduction," by Glenn Pate, from your January 1981 issue. Pate's article will greatly aid in the ongoing human relations education of the 96,000 Air National Guard members.

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A QUESTION ON LEARNING STYLES

Thank you for publishing the collection of articles on "learning style" in the

February issue. All were interesting to me for the same reason, but "Style—A Manner of Thinking" most clearly shows how they all fail. Davis and Schwimmer caution that "... if we are going to accurately assess learning style, we need to start with the whole and not the isolated parts. We don't want to be blind men describing the elephant." Yet that is exactly what they have done. The entire concept of "style" is non-rational; any attempt to treat it with "logic" alone (which is impossible for humans) is destined for failure and also constitutes a tremendous disservice to the deliciousness of that very concept. What about "feelings"—without which learning cannot occur? Even the authors of this feelingly value-saturated article rely on them.

"Still there is the feeling that this isn't all there is to it, that there must be more to learning and thinking than taking in information and putting it out again." Indeed there is more; there is taking in information, changing the information, and only then putting it out again. No bit of information can pass through the human mind without undergoing change. Each change is unique. And each change relies on and includes non-rational feelings. Those who deny this inescapable reality by excluding it from their writings are no more informed than the blind elephant researchers. Let us, then, halt this silliness and get about the messy business of studying what actually happens rather than only those parts which are quickly condensed into research designs that are easy to complete, and report, and dismiss as inapplicable to the delightful vagaries of real educational practice.

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HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

The monthly column, "The Way I See It" should be a forum for the presentation of a point of view on an important issue in education. It should not be a vehicle for the promotion or advertisement of an education product. Charles L. Mitsakos' column [January 1981] was

clearly and unfortunately an example of this latter practice. Although Mitsakos argued for the careful evaluation of history texts before final selection, he then proceeded to describe how the text he coauthored was painstakingly developed to take into account the sensitivities of all groups and the needs of junior high school students. No external evidence was offered to substantiate the merits of the text he coauthored and such inclusion was not warranted to adequately present his point of view.

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Editor's note: Readers' comments on our articles are welcome. Address letters to Editor, *Educational Leadership*, 225 No. Washington St., Alexandria, Virginia 22314. Letters accepted for publication may be edited for brevity and clarity.

WRITING FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

We welcome manuscripts on any aspect of curriculum, instruction, supervision, or leadership in elementary and secondary education. Papers should be written in direct, readable style and be as brief as possible (five to ten pages typed double-spaced). We reserve the right to edit for brevity, clarity, and consistency of style.

References may be cited as footnotes or listed in bibliographic form at the end of the article. For examples of either style, refer to a recent issue or to Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* (University of Chicago Press). Double-space everything, including quotations and footnotes.

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