

Letters

ACCOUNTABILITY OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Albert Shanker [November 1980] says federal monies are going to "community based organizations that keep no records, report no progress, and are accountable only to themselves." This generalization does not reflect community programs such as the one I work with.

A community program tends to be a supplier of services that support the priorities of a school system. Legislation places the power to decide the need for and desirability of the support with the school system. We are accountable to funding sources and their administrative and political agencies, students, parents, the corporation's board of directors, and the faculties and administrators we work with for the quantity and quality of service.

The methods used to measure success and lack of success are thoroughly quantifiable and documented. Student and program progress are reported regularly and frequently. In the case of our organization, progress is formally reviewed monthly.

Obviously, Mr. Shanker and I disagree as to the importance and effect of community organizations supporting a school system. As with any group or representative body there are ineffective and uncontrolled programs in operation. However, there are many community based programs that are effective, valued, and accountable.

—KENNETH ROMINES
Director
Mission Reading Clinic
San Francisco, California

BASIC SKILLS TESTING

There seems to be a cloud of dust obscuring some pertinent facts about testing in New Jersey [December 1980].

Shine and Goldman do not mention that the skills tested were basic skills appropriate to the specific grade levels identified by educators from all districts in New Jersey.

Their comment that there is a difference between skills learned in isolation

and the ability to use this knowledge in another situation cannot be refuted; without application, rote learning falls into disuse. But a testing situation is a sampling of transfer.

As a parent and educator I see student mastery of these skills as the minimum expected. These tests sample a subset of what students can be expected to know. There is no reason our children should not do well on them.

—ELIZABETH DODD
Administrative Assistant
Dunellen Board of Education
Dunellen, New Jersey

I read with interest "Governance by Testing in New Jersey" by Shine and Goldman and the response by New Jersey Commissioner Fred G. Burke [December 1980]. Since the advent in 1975 of the New Jersey system of "thorough and efficient" education, decision making has become more centralized every year. Whenever any school system, especially an urban system, has demonstrated a need or deficiency, that has become an excuse for issuing a statewide directive for all school systems. The "T & E" legislation has provided state officials with the opportunity to consolidate their authority over public education and to assert jurisdiction in almost any area.

Numerous state rules and regulations have been promulgated to control the most minute details of school operation. State mandated programs have proliferated with a doubling of cost within the past five years. Total school budgets have been "capped" with the result that state required programs occupy an ever increasing percentage of the local school budgets. These state minimum requirements are directed primarily toward those students who rank academically among the lowest third of the student population. Despite all of this state control and intervention, there has been very little change in student achievement over the five-year period.

The elaborate New Jersey system of political and bureaucratic governance of local public schools has proven to be costly, cumbersome, restrictive, and inefficient. It is not a good model for other states to emulate.

—GEORGE H. DANIEL
Superintendent of Schools
Bound Brook, New Jersey

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WRITING FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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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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Schneider

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involvement—throughout the process—of teachers and administrators.

What schools need, and have sought for years, are practical, validated instructional products and processes. One sure way for a school district to get them is by teaming up with research and development institutions and generating the improvement together.

Large scale curriculum development, like Sputnik itself, is an idea whose time has come and gone. But it has spawned a legacy, programmatic R & D. Now the R & D institutions and the schools must begin to demonstrate the payoff to the nation's school children. ■

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