

Letters

MEXICAN VS. AMERICAN SCHOOLS

Regarding the letter from John Trued [March 1981] in which he compares Mexican schools to U.S. schools, I feel that readers should know that in Mexico:

—Education and teachers are highly respected; therefore, discipline is not a problem;

—Education is a luxury and not a right; it is seen as a means of bettering oneself socially and economically;

—All students must pass end-of-year examinations in order to continue to the next grade level;

—Because students not doing well in school drop out to help with the family financial situation, each grade level contains the "cream of the crop" from the previous level;

—Curriculum for each grade is more advanced than ours. When a student transfers into a U.S. school and is placed in grade by age, he/she is usually two grade levels ahead;

—Most parents of "special education" students keep these children at home;

—Since Spanish is a more phonetic language in its writing system, a native Spanish-speaking student needs less time to learn Spanish reading skills.

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FACTS FOR THE FUTURE

In *Futuristics and Education* [February 1980], Dennis Van Avery does well to raise issues that should concern curriculum developers, school teachers, administrators, and the like. His reasons for doing so are those regularly, if not religiously, cited by futurists everywhere—proliferating crises, rapid change, advancing technology, inability to cope, outmoded linear thinking, and so on.

Yet it is a mistake in the same breath to condemn "the learning of facts" as one of the principal failings of present-day curriculums. One hears and reads this all too often from school critics for whom the learning of facts is looked upon as a kind of school disease, a can-

cer of learning that should be excised from the educational body.

Futurists themselves show a high regard for facts. These are the bread and butter of their craft. Without facts future projections, extrapolations, or forecasts would be, if not impossible, then surely unreliable. And being on target is every futurist's dream. Thus, if anything, a futures-oriented curriculum should incorporate what might be described as a reverence for facts, an appreciation of data, that might even verge on fastidiousness.

In his list of elements facilitating a futures-orientation in learners, Van Avery left out two important elements deserving special emphasis. The first, perhaps most important, is values. Without a doubt, that value which holds human life and happiness in the highest regard—a reverence for all living things—ought to be the underpinning of a curriculum for the future.

The second element is the need to move from an ego-oriented emphasis toward one that promotes group consciousness, the corporate "we," the collective whole. Without these elements all others become merely directions without goals.

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LANGUAGE LEARNING

Your issue on Language Learning [March 1981] is excellent. A diverse group of professionals could profit by discussing the articles. My students will certainly have the opportunity to do so.

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We were pleased to read in the Language Learning issue [March 1981] the article by psycholinguists Yetta and Kenneth Goodman. We have used Goodman's model of reading at our high school for the past five years. All students taught with this model significantly improved in reading in a relatively short period of time.

Our school, The Learning Experi-

ence, is currently investigating the effect of psycholinguistic-based reading instruction in a public high school environment. The results thus far are positive. After the first six weeks of instruction, students composed and laid out a book entitled *Information On Getting A Job*. After six months of instruction with the Goodman model of reading, students are independently translating into modern English a soliloquy from *Hamlet*. This is a group that averaged five years below grade level.

Last year we proved the positive effect of applying Goodman's model with high school students. In a carefully controlled experiment, high school students increased their standardized comprehension score 1.5 years in eight months of instruction. Matched students, taught traditionally at independent and public high schools did not improve their comprehension score. Also, qualitatively, "psycholinguistic" students understood print better than they did before instruction.

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Congratulations on your March [1981] issue. Never have I read so much sense about language and learning in so few pages! The bibliographies that accompany the articles should become required reading for all.

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RESEARCH INFORMATION SERVICE

Let me congratulate you on the enormously useful feature on research [Research Synthesis] appearing in recent issues of *Educational Leadership*. Not only have I enjoyed the features, but I have also discovered their worth in my work with preservice and inservice teachers and administrators. I like the detail of the articles and the quick summary in the "Highlights" boxes. You have begun a long-needed service. It

has been said that no profession is as ignorant of its research as is education. You are decreasing that ignorance.

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EQUITY FOR AMERICAN INDIANS

"An Assessment of Equity" [January 1981] showed both leadership and courage in addressing a topic that is no longer popular. On the whole the articles were excellent for a wide audience.

I was disappointed, however, that the inequality of educational opportunity for American Indians was totally ignored. The plight of Indian children and adolescents is probably worse than that of any other minority, including the most recent Asian refugees. I hope you will give serious consideration to remedying this omission.

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A FOLK SCHOOL IN THE U.S.

I read with interest the article by Samuel Corl on the Danish Folk High Schools [January 1981]. While in Denmark in the summer of 1978 with the Experiment in International Living (Brattleboro, Vermont), I heard from the Danish family with whom I was staying, of the school at Tvind and visited there. The enthusiasm and dedication of the participants, ages 18-65, was inspirational. Their educational system was quite rigorous and certainly would not easily fit into many American school systems, save those motivated by change.

Recently, I was visited in my classroom by two Danes from Tvind who had come to the U.S. to establish a branch of their traveling folk school in America. Your readers may write for information to: The Traveling Folk School, P.O. Box 60, New Point, VA 23125. Perhaps with a school close at hand, we can follow Corl's advice to watch the Danes more carefully. The courage it takes to establish this experimental school in the U.S. alone should be a sign to us of their vitality and effectiveness.

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TUITION TAX CREDITS

I very strongly oppose the position taken by ASCD in regard to tuition-tax credit legislation. Every other resolution adopted at St. Louis is positive and intended as an aid to educational improvement. Opposition to tuition-tax credits represents a venture far from the purpose of our Association. When did ASCD start to deviate from concern with instruction, curriculum, and supervision?

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SELECTING TEACHERS: CAN THEY REALLY TEACH?

I enjoyed reading Leonard Pellicer's "Improving Teacher Selection With the Structured Interview" [March 1981], but I believe several additional points should be addressed, including use of an interview panel and observation of the candidate's teaching.

As a school principal I have had the honor of making some excellent teacher hires. On the other hand, I have also had the dubious distinction of selecting some real "duds." Consequently, I decided to include other personnel in the hiring process. I suggest a panel made up of the principal, a parent representative from the P.T.A., the department chairperson, a counselor, and perhaps a student.

Pellicer mentioned five categories of questions: relationships with children, relationships with colleagues, relationships with parents, relationships with community, and instructional techniques. I suggest that members of the five-person screening committee ask predetermined questions in each of these categories.

After the teacher candidates have been interviewed, each committee member should rate each prospective teacher on a scale—perhaps 0-9. The principal would then average the ratings and determine the top two or three candidates. What is important is that the candidates are looked at from a variety of perspectives. I need to add the assumption that the personnel office should have screened applicants' credentials prior to the committee meeting.

In the Chino Unified School District, we have an excellent professional development program. We propose to utilize the talents of our teacher trainers as well as certain aspects of our staff development program in teacher selection by having the top two or three teacher candidates teach a sample lesson to a select panel of observers. The

process will be to give the top candidates a specific objective in their major content area and ask them to teach a 15-minute lesson. We will give them 24 hours to prepare the lesson.

Administratively we will select from two possible models for our observation: either ask the candidate to simulate teaching the lesson directly to the panel, or arrange for him or her to teach the lesson in an actual classroom, with members of the observation panel to observe.

The observer panel will consist of the principal, the professional development trainer, and the department chairperson or a master teacher. Each of them should be trained in clinical supervision techniques. The teacher observation panel will then make a recommendation to the principal, and the principal, who is ultimately responsible, should make the final decision.

I grant that this is a lengthy process, but when a teacher is hired the tenure is often lengthy and dismissing a teacher once hired is also lengthy. Taking the time to do the job right in the first place will save time in the future. Besides, you hire a teacher who can actually teach.

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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.

Please send two copies. Rejected manuscripts are not returned unless the author provides a self-addressed envelope with the necessary postage.

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