

# News Notes

ROBERT C. MCKEAN AND BOB L. TAYLOR

## ■ SURVEY SHOWS PARENTS AID LEARNING

A recent survey of 3,700 elementary teachers and 600 principals in Maryland found that many favor involving parents in home-learning activities with their children. However, some teachers identified serious problems connected with this practice. While some argued that only well-educated parents can be of assistance, other teachers involve parents of all educational backgrounds.

Conducted by the Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University, the survey provided information on the nature and extent of teachers' current practices of parent involvement and suggested directions for future research. Teachers surveyed agreed on two points: parent involvement is important to solving problems faced by schools, and parent involvement in the classroom increases participation in learning activities at home.

Teachers were split, however, on several questions: can parents help their children at home; can they help their children with reading and arithmetic problems; is it fair to ask parents to spend time in the evening on school-related activities; do parents really want to know more about the school curriculum?

Techniques most frequently used by teachers were encouraging parents to read to the child or listen to him or her read; asking parents to take the child to the library; loaning books and teaching materials to parents to use at home with the child. Others encouraged discussions between parents and child; negotiated learning contracts with parents; and taught parents how to make learning materials and to teach specific skills.

Those surveyed reported having the most contact with parents whose children had learning and discipline problems and parents who were active in the school or classroom.

The 40-page report, *Parent Involvement: Teacher Practices and Judgments*, is available for \$3 per copy from the Publications Office, Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University, 2505 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218.

## ■ ELECTRIC LEARNING COMES NATURALLY

By the time most American children start school, they have learned to learn from television. Furthermore, they are unprepared to learn from print. According to Professor Mary Alice White of the Laboratory for the Psychological Study of Tele-communications at Teachers College, Columbia University, the electronic revolution is here. By age three or four children are aware that music and sound effects, as well as changes in types of voices, are cues to look at the TV screen. They have developed strategies about when to pay attention.

Because the situation is different in the classroom, they do not know when to listen. They do not know the cues, and to obtain information they have to learn to read words rather than images.

While television communicates largely through images, it is not known how the brain stores the images, for how long, how they are recalled, or even how to measure if they have been stored. Children probably have thousands of little pictures tucked away by the time they come to school. It is estimated that they have seen 20,000 commercials a year by the time they enter kindergarten.

When TV does communicate through words, the words are more likely to be heard than read. They are merely stimuli that reinforce images on the screen. These images may not be subjected to the same kind of evaluation as words stored by the mind. A child watching a newscast may store different images from the word information stored after reading about the same event.

The full text of White's speech is available upon request from Columbia University's Office of Public Relations, Phone: (212) 678-3720.

## ■ EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS—SCAT

The Maine Department of Educational Services uses local educational personnel to help school systems with problems relating to curriculum development and other areas. State Curriculum Assistance Teams (SCATs), made up of teachers, administrators, and department personnel, are available to local school districts asking for their services.

The teams provide workshops, program reviews, reviews of new educational processes and programs, classroom observations, staff development, and evaluations of materials, methods, and equipment. Staff evaluations are not undertaken.

SCATs respond to specific requests from local districts and are limited to short-term commitments. Long-term programs recommended by SCAT are the responsibility of the district. While the district may seek extensive follow-up from individuals serving on the teams, these are individual agreements independent of SCAT activities.

SCAT on-site visits are restricted to three days, but a day or two is most common. Team members are reimbursed for travel, meals, and lodging. The local districts from which the teams are recruited are reimbursed to help defray the costs of substitute teachers. There is no cost to the district requesting the team.

These teams are a cost-effective way to assist schools in curriculum study and development. Also, they help schools organize goals and objectives, implement improved ways of teaching, share information about exemplary programs, and provide a broad base for staff development.

Additional information concerning the SCAT program may be obtained from SCAT, Division of Curriculum, Department of Educational and Cultural Services, Station 23, Augusta, ME 04333. Phone: (207) 289-2541.

## ■ STUDENTS WORK PART-TIME

The hiring of high school students as emergency relief workers has been approved by the Los Angeles Board of Education. In this experimental program students serve as substitute clerical and custodial personnel. If the building principal finds that help is needed to maintain the flow of office procedures or that clean-up work is needed in the interest of health and safety, then willing students may be hired to help out for no more than four hours a day. No student is excused from instructional time to do paid work on campus.

Students need a work permit and must be at least 14 years old to get one. Student workers are supervised by regular clerical or custodial employees, and

the total hours authorized by the principal may not exceed the hours a regular employee would have been on the job.

The program is to be tested in several schools and reported back to the School Board for further action.

## The Future

CHRISTOPHER DEDE AND  
ARTHUR J. LEWIS

### ■ BRAIN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Frank Farley, in his presidential address to the American Educational Research Association, forecasts that "Education in the year 2000 will be radically altered by emerging conceptions of what the brain can do and what we can do to the brain." Farley cites recent research of interest to educators, including "evoked potentials and learning ability," "attentional differences," "sensory styles and teaching/learning environments," and "biological cycles and physical performance."

Educators who want to stay informed regarding fast-breaking developments in brain research can read the *Brain/Mind Bulletin*. This bulletin, published every three weeks, reports on the frontiers of brain and mind research, theory and practice. Articles vary from reports on Frank Farley's speech, above, to discussions of Sheldrake's controversial morphogenetic field theory. Yearly subscriptions of \$15 per year may be sent to Interface Press, P.O. Box 42211, 231 S. Ave. 52, Los Angeles, CA 90042.

### ■ CREATIVITY AND BRAIN LATERALIZATION

Roger Sperry, recent winner of the Nobel Prize for his research on the brain, writes that "there appear to be two modes of thinking, verbal and nonverbal, represented rather separately in left and right hemispheres, respectively, and that our educational system, as well as science in general, tends to neglect the nonverbal form of intellect." Betty Edwards, in her book *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, provides a clear explanation of the two hemispheres and applies brain research findings to drawing. By following her instructions, the reader is able to release and experience some of the power of the right hemisphere, a truly "mind expanding" experience. Her book is a 1979 publication by I.P. Tarcher, Inc., 9110 Sunset

Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069.

### ■ FUTURE STUDIES IN NEW YORK SCHOOL

The Shallow Intermediate School in Brooklyn, New York, teaches "future studies" to gifted and talented students twice weekly. The curriculum includes "basics for an advanced technological society": computer literacy, ramifications of genetic engineering, impact of robots on the American economy, synthetic body parts, and ecological energy sources. Goals for the program include improved scientific decision making and global rather than tunnel vision thinking. A comprehensive curriculum guide developed by the faculty suggests activities for seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students. Donald Del Seni is the principal—6500 16th Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11204.

### ■ LITERATURE AS A FUTURES RESOURCE

With the curriculum crowded with subjects competing for class time, building students' skills in envisioning and understanding alternative futures can be difficult unless some other instructional goal is simultaneously served. A resource book for teachers and librarians has recently been published which is designed to aid in using the novel as a means to explore the future. *Images in a Crystal Ball* suggests ways to combine discussions of literary merit and style with explorations of futures-oriented content.

This handbook has four sections: the first delineates instructional strategies teachers and librarians can use to involve students in grades four to nine in literature, using futures as a motivational tool. The second section describes the range of futures images available in works of literary merit, and the third gives summaries and discussion suggestions for about 150 titles (all published between 1964 and 1979). The final section provides a very useful index of themes and topics, thus enabling the reader to locate books involving a particular motif (such as "utopias and dystopias").

*Images in a Crystal Ball: World Futures in Novels for Young People* was written by Lillian Wehmeyer, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction in San Mateo, California. It is available from Libraries Unlimited (P.O. Box 263, Littleton, CO 80160) for \$18.50.

### ■ SURVEYING THE FUTURE

One of the most useful publications of

the World Future Society is *Future Survey*, a monthly abstract of books, reports, pamphlets, and articles. Typically, the contents of a given issue are categorized under topics such as People and Resources, Education, Communications Technology, Energy, Science and Technology, Outer Space. Any publication that addresses what is changing, what may happen, or what ought to happen is reviewed in detailed but readable style. The key ideas are identified, and works of special interest are asterisked.

Since January, 1979, *Future Survey* has reviewed over 4,000 titles; each issue averages 100 abstracts. Michael Marien, the editor, has been involved with educational futures for a long time; he was on the staff at the Educational Policy Research Center at Syracuse University in the early 1970s.

Summary volumes containing the information from past issues are also available. *Future Survey Annual 1979* and *Future Survey Annual 1980-81* each list over a thousand citations of publications dealing with trends, forecasts, and policy proposals. These two books supplement the World Future Society's basic volume on the futures field, *The Future: A Guide to Information Sources* (revised second edition), which lists futures-oriented organizations, research projects, individuals, educational programs, books, periodicals, and reports.

The two *Future Survey Annuals* and *The Future: A Guide to Information Sources* cost \$25 each; subscriptions to *Future Survey* are \$28/year for individuals, \$40/year for libraries and institu-

#### 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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