

Book Reviews

Creating Effective Schools.

Wilbur Brookover, Laurence Beamer, Helen Eftim, Douglas Hathaway, Lawrence Lezotte, Stephen Miller, Joseph Passalacqua, and Louis Tornatzky.

Holmes Beach, Florida:
Learning Publications, Inc.

—Reviewed by Tommy M. Tomlinson, NIE Senior Associate and Staff, National Commission on Excellence in Education.

This upbeat, can-do book, designed to provide "an inservice program for enhancing school learning climate and achievement," is full of advice for getting the most learning out of the least apt students and the most teaching out of the least inspired instructors. How? You make both the students and the teachers believe the students can learn, then you provide the teachers with a method that in practice forbids failure at the low end of achievement and in theory does not rule out high achievement by children ready, willing, and able to learn. Perhaps I've oversimplified their idea, but truly that is the authors' prescription for effective schools.

Brookover and his colleagues draw on their own research and experience and that of others to describe schooling that sounds practical and full of "common sense." Indeed, readers may find themselves thinking if this is all there is (it *does* seem so simple and straightforward) then why in the world has it taken all this time to figure it out? Pardon my incredulity, but really, in order to be effective, must teachers be taught these things *after* they leave teachers college? What are they teaching teachers in those places?

Brookover and his colleagues hold out a seductive, almost heroic, package of corrective measures. Consider: not only can all children learn if you follow their prescription, but all children can be "high achievers"—that is, learn the same amount and quality of substance heretofore reserved for "smart" kids. After all, according to the authors research says that for the price of six minutes a day we can have the difference between failure and mastery for the slowest child. Six minutes of instruction to make sure the child "gets it"—one hour every two weeks. Why, just the tips to tighten up



classroom management would save more than six minutes every day. All this comes with hardly any extra effort and none that requires extra compensation or overtime—very seductive stuff. On second thought, how much extra time will it take for the slowest students to equal the quickest if the quickest are learning to the limit of their ability? Seductive indeed, and I'm skeptical.

The tone of the book, like much of the so-called effective schools research, leans more toward romantic sentiment than to tenets of good science. Too often the arguments are incomplete or deceptive and based on mushy reasoning and ambiguous evidence. Take the following examples:

1. The book makes no operational distinctions between levels of schooling; by implication one method fits all. The phrase "high school" crops up a few times, usually without context, and the authors write as though they want the reader to believe that their book is about high schools and middle schools as well as elementary schools. But their examples, theory, research, and discussions are all about elementary schools, and even more, about low achievers. We are told that the methods and program work as well for high achieving students as low, and we are told that all low achieving students can become high achievers, but we are not provided with any discussion or examples, much less proof, that these things happen in any but elementary schools (and little enough of that). Our only "guarantee," not that we should discard it, is that all children can

learn enough to meet acceptable (to somebody) standards of mastery, providing they have enough time to learn. There are no other caveats, which upon thinking about the conspicuous differences between grade school students and high school students seems, charitably, a little naive—a situation not uncommon to much of the effective schools literature.

2. Standards of performance are discussed as group goals rather than measures of individual accomplishment. The authors seem to believe that learning is optimal when all children learn equally, which reduces their attention to individual differences and sets narrow limits on their definition of school quality. That belief also evades a well established characteristic of human learning—as talent emerges and responds to training and instruction, effective schooling should expand the differences between students rather than restrict them.

According to the book's definition of good practice, schools with high variability among students' performances are doing something wrong. Unfortunately, if the quality of a school is judged by how many children reach an arbitrary level of academic mastery, then we will not know if the school is fully responsive to variations in student ability and what effort has been made on behalf of developing individual talent.

The authors wish to reduce competition to maintain the underachieving student's self-esteem so they reduce emphasis on individual differences. Yet choosing equal outcomes over individual competition simply substitutes one limited standard for another, and the concern about the self-esteem of children in urban schools may be a moot issue. If we can believe the evidence, the majority of students in "urban schools" are underachievers of similar background. Where are the invidious comparisons? Ironically, despite the restrained composition of urban schools, the grouping issue is at once a little more important and a little more sticky than this book indicates. Being relatively scarce, high achieving minority students want to be identified and nurtured, but in school they are both of and in the minority and in danger of being

submerged by a "critical mass" of underachievement. Now *that* is a policy problem worthy of the authors' attention and perhaps even susceptible to their program, but it is one that for all their good intentions seems to have escaped their notice.

3. In module 1, throughout module 2, and again in module 7 the reader is told that underachievement, especially that in poor and minority youngsters, is substantially a product of prejudice and other "mythology" that leads teachers to expect little and predict the worst from these students (the "self-fulfilling prophecy").

There are, however, competing explanations for the observed connection between teacher attitudes and underachievement of poor and minority children. One version simply reverses cause and effect and says that the teachers become discouraged as time after time, despite their best efforts, poor and minority children fail to learn. This explanation would, by the way, be entirely consistent with the observation that teachers enter the field full of enthusiasm for the job. Another has it that compassionate teachers do not hold miserably burdened poor and minority children to the same standards as they do less burdened, more privileged children. It isn't that the children aren't smart enough, rather it is that they have too much to carry and school is only another of their problems.

If Brookover is wrong, or more likely, right only for some children, then, as far as the teachers are concerned, more may be required of them than mere relief from their prejudices and low expectations. They may have to learn that compassion for the poor does not justify or allow compensatory reduction of standards or expectations for work. Accordingly they may have to demand that poor children work hard in school, perhaps harder than facile or privileged children. Finally, we may have to change teacher expectations so that, contrary to the views expressed in this book, they can live with hard working, low achieving children without blaming themselves for the children's failure and without burning out as a result of their pain and frustration.

In closing, I wish the authors had

kept their language and the scale of their expectations under better control. Had they done so their book might have remained a welcome working model for a program to educate the heretofore uneducable. As it is, they risk being dismissed for making too many unfounded and implicit claims about the scope and product of their methods—claims that, after all, will be tested by skeptical, biased, but experienced teachers.

Available from Learning Publications, Inc., for \$24.95.

Second Opinion: A Response by Maureen McCormack Larkin

Tomlinson is correct in characterizing *Creating Effective Schools* as an up-beat, can-do book. The up-beat tone is conveyed in the author's straightforward assertion that students can learn, teachers can teach, and schools can be effective in educating all students independent of their family background. These are not romantic fantasies, as the reviewer claims, but are beliefs grounded in an extensive and substantive body of research based on observations of and interactions with effective school practitioners.

The authors' arguments are not derived from "mushy reasoning," but simply reflect an ideology of schooling that is unacceptable to the reviewer. Tomlinson contends that good schooling should expand the differences between students rather than restrict them, whereas the authors are more concerned with maximizing the opportunities for achievement for all students in an effort to diminish the unjustifiable academic and social stratification created and/or sustained by schools. The authors do not pit equity against excellence, as the reviewer does, and do not believe that the schools must choose between educating the low achievers at the expense of the high achievers or vice versa.

The book identifies the characteristics most consistently cited in the school and teacher effectiveness research and provides a clear, thorough explanation of each characteristic. These descriptions

are followed by a set of concrete, specific, and practical activities designed to assist practitioners in improving their schools in a systematic manner. The tenor of the book is not axiomatic or dogmatic, but rather emphasizes the need for collaborative planning and collegial participation in the decision-making process and offers suggestions for how a school staff can initiate and maintain this type of organizational structure.

The book does state that additional money or resources are not necessary, but in no way does it portray the task of improving schools as a simple or effortless one. The task necessitates a heightening of staff awareness of the effective school principles, willingness of the staff to analyze the needs of their school in light of these principles, and a commitment by the staff to change the inappropriate norms, policies, and practices that have contributed to the underachievement of their students.

The reviewer questions why it has taken so long to effectively and equitably educate children of lesser advantage and why teacher training institutions have failed in preparing teachers to do so. These are questions the reviewer may reasonably wish to ponder. However, those of us who are practitioners prefer to be about the business of making our schools more effective.

We in Milwaukee's Project RISE have used the materials incorporated in *Creating Effective Schools* and have found those materials to be excellent tools for achieving their purpose.—(SEE MAUREEN MCCORMACK LARKIN'S ARTICLE, P. 16).

Doing the Ethnography of Schooling: Educational Anthropology in Action.

George Spindler, editor.

New York:

CBS College Publishing, 1982.

—Reviewed by Murry Nelson, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania.

"What is ethnography and what perspectives does it offer for educators?" To answer these questions this book defines and describes educational ethnography.

There are five parts to the book; the first, "Self-Appraisals: Concerns and Strategies," addresses the rapid rise in the use of ethnographic methodology to analyze schooling.

Part V, a useful chapter for educational researchers, reviews the research on ethnography as methodology and its applications to the study of schooling. Parts II-IV study types of schooling research for students of different age groups.

Use of this book by educational researchers, students in education, or teachers would generate broader thinking about what goes on in schools.

Available from CBS College Publishing, 383 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10017, for \$24.95.

Profile: The Role of the Chief Superintendent of Schools.

John F. Feilders.
Belmont, California:
Pitman Learning, Inc., 1982.

—Reviewed by William Leary, North Babylon Union Free School District, North Babylon, New York.

Most urban superintendents face a grueling daily schedule of meetings, conferences, telephone calls, decision-making crises large or small, and, of course, paperwork. *Profile* describes a composite working day in the life of Superintendent Robert Alioto of San Francisco. Most of the book emphasizes the "highlights of the superintendent's day rather than . . . the mundane."

The author concludes that although all the superintendent's daily tasks are important, attention to the process of teaching and learning in the classroom is critical. The superintendent can directly influence curriculum and instruction through organized management procedures, political skills, and personality.

Finally, for those who think the superintendent's role is nonpolitical, Alioto spends a quarter of his week responding to and interacting with school board members. He does this to maintain his power base and provide auspice for his organizational decisions.

Available from Pitman Learning, Inc., 6 Davis Dr., Belmont, CA 94002, for \$6.95.

Course Design: A Guide to Curriculum Development for Teachers, second edition.

George J. Posner and Alan N. Rudnitsky.
New York:
Longman, 1982.

—Reviewed by Doris M. Brown, University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Continuing to provide systematic yet flexible procedures for designing curriculum for secondary or higher education, Posner and Rudnitsky now include in this second edition of *Course Design* a sample course on metrics for primary age students and offer a tidbit for elementary teachers as well.

The text is strong in developing a course rationale and in conceptual mapping. Almost self-instructional in the step-by-step approach to attaining objectives, it can serve as a companion to any number of books on curriculum theory—or it could stand alone. While noticeably lacking in documentation, the number of references listed at the end of each chapter are compensation, and make this omission a strength for the product-oriented curriculum writer.

Published by Longman. Priced at \$10.95.

Entry: The Hiring, Start-up, and Supervision of Administrators.

Barry Jentz, Dan S. Cheever, Jr., Stephen B. Fisher, Meredith Howe Jones, Paul Kelleher, and Joan W. Wofford.
New York:
McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982.

—Reviewed by Frank Arone, Clarkstown Public Schools, West Nyack, New York.

This book focuses on the place of structure, process, and procedures within three particular areas of administrative responsibility: hiring, entry, and supervision of new subordinates.

With skill and insight the authors address the question: How can an administrator who believes in collaboration successfully commence a new as-

signment or assist a subordinate in beginning well? The writers examine not only the actions of a new administrator but also how the hiring procedures can help a district or organization clarify its needs and aspirations and renew its commitment to its objectives. Second, they also present strategies for the administrator to reflect upon self and setting and produce a plan that uses the values of collaboration. Finally, they examine procedures that demonstrate how an experienced administrator can successfully supervise the entry of a new subordinate.

Available from McGraw-Hill Book Company for \$15.95.

Developmental Perspectives on the Social Studies.

Linda W. Rosenzweig, editor.
Washington, D.C.:

National Council for the Social Studies,
1982.

—Reviewed by Marjorie E. Souers, Purdue University at Fort Wayne, Indiana.

The NCSS Bulletin, *Developmental Perspectives on the Social Studies*, contains papers that focus on research within developmental psychology and the implications of that research for social studies. The intent is for social studies teachers to become more perceptive observers of their students and, as a result, more capable of matching curriculum to student needs.

For all readers the book's overview is important; it describes the developmentalists whose work has specific implications for social studies. The remaining papers can be read as independent articles, selected according to the grade level and subject area interests of the educator. Those interested in a more in-depth study could use the listed references, and those interested in conducting further research should note suggestions offered in the concluding paper.

Available from National Council for the Social Studies, 3615 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20016, for \$6.95.

Contemporary Challenges for Vocational Education.

Katy B. Greenwood, editor.

Arlington, Virginia:

American Vocational Association, 1981.

—Reviewed by Ralph Erickson, Troy State University, Troy, Alabama.

The 29 authors are more concerned with work behaviors, interpersonal skills, and management training than with occupational competencies. Vocational education is perceived as an instrument of national policy to solve social problems.

They study nonschool-based programs and analyze the relationship of vocational education and social mobility. The book highlights problems such as small female enrollments, academically modest learners, and low job placement for minorities.

Although the charts are good and it is highly readable, the book raises more questions than it answers.

Available from American Vocational Association, 2020 N. 14th St., Arlington, VA 22201, for \$9.

Assessing Affective Characteristics in the Schools.

Lorin W. Anderson.

Boston, Massachusetts:

Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1981.

—Reviewed by Joseph Brudnicki, Stephen F. Austin University, Nacogdoches, Texas.

Suppose you wanted to evaluate a student's or faculty member's attitudes, feelings, or emotions. What instruments are available? Would observations be enough? Perhaps the information you want is not on the scales you have available. This book can answer your questions; it is a comprehensive analysis of the strengths and pitfalls of scales both purchased and self-constructed.

It includes guidelines in stages to aid you in constructing your own valid and reliable scales, and provides illustrations and activities to make interpretation and application of data more concrete for use in the classroom.

Supervisors and teachers will find this a useful resource.

Available from Allyn and Bacon, Inc., for \$22.95.

Communication and Social Skills: Towards a Theory and Practice of Audio-Visual Language and Learning.

Carol Lorac and Michael Weiss.

Exeter, England:

A. Wheaton & Company, Limited, 1981.

—Reviewed by Lois Roets, teacher/coordinator for Talented and Gifted Programs, North Mahaska Schools, New Sharon, Iowa.

Secondary teachers, do you need a new approach to teach communication and social skills? If you have access to AV equipment, and can use it to produce programs or are willing to learn these skills, this book is for you. It provides examples of TV program, tape-slide presentation, documentary and animated film, and sound recordings along with a description of the students in the program. The book is complete: applicable education theory, case histories with examples, outlines of skills and general methods. This program was quite successful in England where it was developed.

Available from A. Wheaton & Company Limited, Hennock Rd., Exeter, England, for \$12.

Reducing Adolescent Prejudice: A Handbook.

Nina Hersch Gabelko and John U. Michaelis.

New York and London:

Teachers College Press, 1981.

—Reviewed by Eleanor Blumenberg, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.

Because research indicated that adolescent prejudice and acceptance of stereotypes remained at a disturbing high, a team of educators from the University of California developed this handbook.

It contains approximately 50 instructional modules that can be incorporated into existing social studies, English, and ethnic studies classes.

Each lesson contains three important components. First, identification of key concepts such as discrimination and scapegoating; second, specification of

the necessary thinking processes, sequencing them from first level processes (such as comparing and interpreting) to higher level processes (such as analysis and synthesis). The third component deals with valuing processes, in a non-judgmental, nonthreatening fashion. The authors stress the development of conceptual thinking skills and a notion called "cognitive sophistication," which the original research suggested as a means of prejudice reduction.

Most of the lessons are self-contained; all should prove interesting to secondary school students and their teachers. A bound set of the handouts developed for each lesson, printed on spirit duplicating masters, is available for separate purchase.

Available from Teachers College Press or from Social Studies School Service, 10,000 Culver Blvd., Culver City, CA 90230, for \$14.95 for the Handbook, \$17.95 for the duplicating masters.

Teaching Children to Love Themselves: A Handbook for Parents and Teachers of Young Children.

Michael E. Knight, Terry L. Graham, Rose A. Juliano, Susan R. Miksza, and Pamela G. Tonnies.

Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey:

Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982.

—Reviewed by Lorraine Scott, University of the Pacific, Stockton, California.

A positive self-concept can be the directing force in all behavior, according to these authors. To that end, they suggest activities that enhance children's self-concepts as part of their academic lessons.

There are also specific ideas for teachers and parents to evaluate and improve their own positive attitudes.

This text has value as a reference in lesson planning for teachers, supervisors, and teacher-educators of preschool, kindergarten, and elementary students.

Available from Prentice-Hall, Inc., for \$5.95.

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