

Letters

THE ART OF . . .

Elliot Eisner's (January 1983) essay on the art of teaching was thought-provoking and insightful. In arguing his case, Eisner also demonstrated his masterful command of the art of writing.

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The January 1983 issue on the art of teaching was fantastic! I've read it over several times and thoroughly enjoyed it from cover to cover. It rekindled some ideas I've thought about for years. Nice job.

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GETTING THE MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE

John Goodlad's *Study of Schooling* ("What Some Schools and Classrooms Teach," April 1983) is a phenomenal work. The results are dispiriting, yet right on target.

For teachers as well as students, the cards, as Goodlad says, "are stacked against innovation and deviation." Thus, the situation drives many a bright, creative teacher into other fields—leaving bright, creative students to struggle through alone. Somehow, the cycle must be broken. Newly selected teachers should be encouraged to explore learning environments directly, in a "discovery oasis of some sort." Doing one's practice teaching in existing schools serves only to perpetuate present models.

Although educational journals provide Goodlad's findings with a highly professional, interested audience, a study of this magnitude requires and deserves a broader audience to achieve action. Tonight the headlines in my local newspaper read "T.V. Transforms Sports Into Big Leagues." Isn't it possible for television to transform educational research into the minor leagues at least? If, for instance, the PBS "Nova"

series were to turn *A Study of Schooling* into one or more segments, it could be brought to national attention and to the attention of teachers—the majority of whom, it is my hunch, do not read educational journals.

If reform on even a small scale is to result in significant change, then John Goodlad and other noted researchers must get their message to the people.

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THE THIRD WORLD RELOCATED?

While the sentiment may be commendable, I found several flaws in the description of John and Kathrynne Favors' strategy to help Third World students ("Education for Pluralism," March 1983).

My first objection is to the use of the term Third World when referring to black students. Those students are Americans, unless the U.S. has suddenly become a Third World country. Labeling students Third World will certainly not correct their learning disabilities or raise their self-esteem. The term Third World has terrible connotations: poverty, hunger, disease, and underdeveloped minds that result from those conditions. Such a label can only reinforce the segregationist tendencies that already exist in this country; it cannot make minority students feel more "at home." Home is the United States.

Second, where did the Favors get the idea that only black students have a strong need to talk and interact while learning? I have attended both an all-black school and a predominantly white school, and I could see little difference in the students' needs to talk and interact in class. (I personally have no need to do so, but perhaps I'm the exception; I don't speak Ebonics, either.) Another term for this need is hyperactivity or lack of discipline, which does not stem from a cultural trait. It stems from a lax system that allows for such "needs" by referring to them as cultural traits that

cation. Although the amount of money is a drop in the bucket given the magnitude of the problem, the bills do show that some of our national leaders recognize the need for a national commitment to education.

One particularly negative "solution" to the problem has been for states and localities to lower their standards for becoming a mathematics teacher and to recertify teachers of other subjects to teach mathematics even when they are clearly not qualified. In New York City, for example, one contract to retrain teachers of other subjects to teach mathematics was awarded to a local community college. Can you imagine the outcry that would have resulted if a contract to retrain proctologists to be brain surgeons had been awarded to a community college? Surely, if teaching is to be taken seriously as a profession we ought to expect prospective teachers to study content and methods above the sophomore level of college.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics has taken the stand that students at all levels should be taught by fully qualified teachers whose professional preparation meets or exceeds that of regularly certified teachers. The NCTM also supports innovative strategies for dealing with the shortage such as bonuses, industry-sponsored fellowships, and others.

Copies of "Mathematics Teacher Shortage: The Facts," and "Position Statement on the Mathematics Teacher Shortage and Retraining Programs" are available at no cost from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1906 Association Dr., Reston VA 22091. Copies of *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of Mathematics* are available from the same source for \$3.10 a copy (\$2.48 for NCTM members).

cannot be helped because they were inherited. That takes the blame away from the system and the child and puts it on the child's "heritage."

All children have a need to talk and interact, though most children are taught that, in the classroom, one talks and interacts at specific times. Do the Favors believe that making allowances for this need in black students will help them? What will happen when those students attend college, where their professors most certainly will not be so accommodating? Students must be prepared to deal with the real world, and not expect a special environment to be created to cater to their own personal needs. Things just don't happen that way.

Third, isn't "Ebonics" simply another euphemism for black English? Many whites who live in underprivileged environments, such as Appalachia, also speak a form of incorrect English, but is their English referred to as Appalachian English? No; it is simply called nonstandard English. Why not just admit that some blacks speak incorrect English and teach them standard English without glorifying their incorrect English? Non-standard English is nonstandard, period, no matter where it comes from.

The problem in teaching blacks and other minority students is that teachers themselves have prejudices. Programs such as the Favors', which separate students because of supposedly cultural traits, can only help to increase those prejudices and stereotypes. For too long blacks have allowed the blame for their substandard work to be placed on their cultural background. It is time for blacks to begin to blame *themselves*. Almost 20 years have passed since the Civil Rights movement began. Instead of moving forward, blacks seem to be slipping backwards under the pressure of all of our backward, supposedly cultural traits. How can the Favors expect black students to develop self-esteem when at the same time they blame blacks' cultural heritage for their backwardness? And isn't it ironic how those blacks who have made important contributions have not had *their* traits assigned to the black culture?

Finally, at what income level is the Favors' program aimed? Considering all the references to the Third World, I would assume it's aimed at low-income families. But then I noticed that the

cost, to the parents, is ten dollars a week.

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CHILDHOOD CRISES

I have seldom read an article that mirrored my own perceptions as well as did "The Disappearing Child" (March 1983). In his usual lucid style, Postman accurately identified a very real problem. It should be no surprise that children suffer from identity crises when they are not allowed to act like children—and when adults who do act like children are confused about their own sex roles!

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LEADERSHIP: THE COMMON ELEMENT

Joseph D'Amico raises some serious questions (December 1982) about the conclusions of most of the effective schools research. He intimates, in fact, that effective schools are "idiosyncratic" and have little in common with one another.

I disagree. D'Amico cites four studies as the basis of his analysis: Brookover and Lezotte (1979), Edmonds and Frederiksen (1979), Duckett and others (1980), and Rutter and others (1979)—which all conclude that principals in effective schools are strong leaders.

Brookover and Lezotte state that these leaders are assertive instructional chiefs and martinets, and that they assume the onus for the appraisal of the achievement of basic skills objectives. Edmonds and Frederiksen conclude that in these schools administrative leadership is strong and essential to uniting the disjointed elements of effective schooling. Duckett and others conclude that the behavior of the principal is crucial in determining school effectiveness. Finally, Rutter and others found that a school's environment is affected positively by the extent to which the school is a harmonious body, with standardized ways of operating that are consistent throughout the school and are supported by the staff.

I must admit that there are differing interpretations of what principals actually contribute to effective schools. Simi-

larly, few of the studies have attempted to spell out the specific components of leadership. Yet all four of these studies (which D'Amico concedes typify the field of research) conclude with confidence that strong administrative leadership is a key component of effective schools.

I will also admit that some of D'Amico's contentions are legitimate—that there is a low match between specific findings and conclusions in some of the studies. Nevertheless, it is equally important to acknowledge the points of consistency in the research.

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PLAUDITS

I applaud the March 1983 issue. I especially welcomed Nystrom's article and Postman's insights.

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The March 1983 issue was just great! What an insight into young people and the forces behind their attitudes, behavior, and performance! Each article I read I wanted to share with my colleagues. Many thanks and keep up the good work.

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Editor's note: Comments on our articles are welcome. Address letters to Editor, Educational Leadership, 225 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Letters accepted for publication may be edited for brevity and clarity.

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