

Perspectives: Middle School Education, 1964-1984

Edited by John H. Lounsbury
Columbus, Ohio:

National Middle School Association,
1984.

—Reviewed by James A. Beane, Professor,
School of Education, St. Bonaventure Uni-
versity, Saint Bonaventure, New York.

Buried as we are beneath the gloom and doom of current educational criticism, it is a relief to run across a volume that brings good news about our schools. *Perspectives: Middle School Education, 1964-1984* tells a story about what must surely be one of the significant episodes in American education, namely the revived interest in and renewed commitment to middle-level education over the past two decades. But this is not just a historical report; it is also an analysis of theory, practice, and research which has guided the revival of quality education for young adolescents.

In format, *Perspectives* is a collection of chapters written by well-known figures on the middle-level school scene. In the cooperative spirit of the movement, the authors include university professors, teachers, and administrators, each discussing an aspect of middle-level education in which he or she has an established reputation. Like other collections of individually-authored chapters, this volume evidences some unevenness in quality. Fortunately, the quality ranges from good to excellent.

Perspectives begins with a look at the historical context of schools for young adolescents, tracing their evolution from the early years of the junior high school to the emergence of middle schools in the 1960s. Arguments about grade-level organization are put to rest with a clear emphasis on curric-

ulum planning responsive to the characteristics of young adolescent learners, regardless of where they are found in the school continuum. Surrounding this focus are descriptions of appropriate instructional organizations, teaching strategies, administrative techniques, and preservice and inservice teacher education programs. Also included is an enlightening review of research on topics of continuing concern to middle-level educators. The volume ends with a compelling set of recommendations that outline a future agenda for maintaining and expanding the quality of middle-level education. What comes through across these chapters is a like-mindedness among the authors that suggests the middle school movement has a defined purpose and direction: it is here to stay and bound to continue. Like other learner-centered programs, those at the middle level are threatened by the spate of academic belt-tightening found in current reform reports. *Perspectives* gives one the impression, however, that the middle-level programs have been conceived carefully enough to survive.

Perspectives is a technically useful volume for those concerned with education of young adolescents. But it is also a celebration of 20 years of successful evolution of a movement. What makes the volume unique is that those who wrote this technical history are, mainly, those who made it happen. Names like Alexander, Lounsbury, Eichhorn, Vars, Melton, Teopfer, and Compton have been familiar to educators throughout the two decades of revitalized attention to middle schools. If this volume is any indication, the same kind of success story will be told again 20 years hence.

Available from the National Middle School Association, P.O. Box 14882, Columbus, OH 43214, for \$9.95 paper, and \$12.95 hard copy.

School Context and School Change

H. Dickson Corbett, Judith A. Dawson,
and William A. Firestone
New York

Teachers College Press, 1984.

—Reviewed by William Bailey, University
of Delaware, Newark, Delaware.

This report from Research for Better Schools, The Philadelphia-based regional laboratory, brings a significant, albeit specialized, message to the education community. The significant points are:

1. As educators address the current reform movement, they should apply the lessons learned from change efforts of the 1960s and 70s.

2. Educators need to recognize the importance of outside assistance concentrating on the interaction of outside and individual school characteristics.

3. Schools are not all alike and therefore must be dealt with individually during the change process.

4. The conditions or social contexts under which successful change occurs are more important than universal principles of change.

The fact that the book is written for field agents (internal and external consultants) brings an element of specialization and limits its utility. The report contains items of special interest to organizational development consultants, field agents, and researchers, such as eight contextual conditions influencing change; role of the field agent; school-based case studies; and qualitative research methods.

Available from Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027, for \$18.95.

Coping with Computers in the Elementary and Middle Schools

C. Alan Riedesel
and Douglas H. Clements
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey:
Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985.

—Reviewed by Kathy Fite, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

Rarely can one find a book on computers that is as compact and comprehensive as this one. Riedesel and Clements have designed a text for preservice and inservice teachers in elementary and middle schools who do not have a computer background; however, it would also be of value to accomplished users.

The chapters target such key components as computer literacy, hardware, software, computer-assisted instruction, computer-managed instruction, software selection, the use of computers in specific subject areas (for example, typing, science, social studies, reading, language arts, mathematics, art, and music), the use of computers with exceptional children, programming in BASIC and LOGO, authoring systems, utility programs, an analysis of the computer world, ways to keep up-to-date, and a look at the future of computers. The text is highlighted with numerous study guides, self-tests, suggested references, bibliographies, names and addresses of computer groups and publications, and a glossary of pertinent terms.

Teachers and administrators will find this to be a book they will want for their personal reference as well as for their students' use.

Available from Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632, for \$21.95.

Supervisory Behavior in Education (Third Edition)

Ben M. Harris
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey:
Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985.

—Reviewed by John Holloway, Toms River High School South, Toms River, New Jersey.

Practicing elementary and secondary school administrators and supervisors, as well as those planning to move into these positions, will find Ben Harris' third edition of *Supervisory Behavior in Education* to be an adroitly crafted, comprehensive manual. The author presents a complete and detailed view of the role of the supervi-

sor, and provides the reader with a list of competencies, skills, and techniques needed to succeed at various tasks.

While Harris offers a "nuts-and-bolts" approach to the world of supervision within the typical school setting, he bases many of his ideas on more theoretical concepts, such as Cogan's clinical process and Eisner's artistic view of the educational connoisseur. The author's skill in blending these with the reality of the job makes this book both credible and extremely usable for those attempting to develop or improve supervisory behavior.

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