High Schools as Communities: The Small School Reconsidered

Thomas B. Gregory and Gerald R. Smith

Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1987

Reviewed by Jim Monasmith, Colville High School, Colville, Washington.

Is smaller better? Authors Gregory and Smith review essentials of five recent major works on high school reform and contend that the sheer size of many of these institutions, once considered their strength, has become a major handicap. Nothing less than a reduction in size to 200-250 students will cure their inherent educational deficiencies.

A change to a smaller structure would benefit students by facilitating learner autonomy and tying together personalized learning and personal development in an active relationship with an unhurried classroom teacher. Teachers could spend less time controlling students and battling bureaucratic constraints and devote more time to teaching, in-depth, by coaching students individually in both their learning and their social development.

Teachers, students, and parents would join in school governance by mutually establishing school directions and standards.

The authors contend that smaller high schools would not cost more money nor compromise the quality of educational programs. A sense of community is important to students and teachers' feelings of belonging, productivity, and effectiveness. Gregory and Smith have described in practical terms an institution more in step with the needs of today's students, teachers, and parents. Their book deserves a wide audience.

Available from Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Eighth St. and Union Ave., Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402, for $6.00.

Curriculum Management for Schools, Colleges, Business

Fenwick W. English


Reviewed by David Ackerman, Winchester Public Schools, Winchester, Massachusetts.

Good curriculum managers, as envisioned by Fenwick English, are those who demand coordination among "the written, taught, and tested curricula." Curriculum managers must align these instructional dimensions in a workable format that is usable and will be monitored in schools. Ideally, program budgets would be intermeshed with curriculum management as well.

What English has learned in a decade's work as a curriculum "auditor" suggests that such managers are a rare breed. Thus, curriculum guides, oblivious to the limited time available to teach, are largely ignored, even by those who write them; curriculum goals aren't tied to assessment of outcomes; and tests are given so that the results can be turned into pretty graphs, not to shape instruction.

The main nemesis in this managerial nightmare is teacher autonomy, whereby curriculum is "pocket vetoed" in the classroom. Fenwick states, "No school system can afford to allow its teachers to be independent contractors with complete latitude of ignoring the specifications of work by which the system will be measured, judged, and funded in the long run."

English's AASA and ASCD seminars, a set of challenging student activities, and copious references. For those interested in curriculum "mapping" and "auditing," practical advice is provided. For educational romantics, the book offers a dip into the icy waters of managerial reality.

Available from Charles C Thomas, 2600 S. First St., Springfield, IL 62794-9265, for $44.75.

The Skillful Mind: An Introduction to Cognitive Psychology

Edited by Angus Gellatly


Reviewed by Esther Fusco, Babylon School, Babylon, New York.

How can we analyze human skills, and what techniques will facilitate their acquisition? The authors of this introductory text focus upon the common cognitive skills and assert that cognitive accomplishments can be understood in terms of the principles involved in skill acquisition. The characteristics of these principles fall into five categories: fluency, rapidity, automaticity, simultaneity, and knowledge. Each is largely affected by motivation and practice. In the remainder of the text, the authors deal with a variety of specific skills including memory, reading, communication, reasoning, and problem solving.

While this book is useful as an introductory text in psychology, the sections on memory, creativity, and problem solving are valuable for all educators. For educators, the notion that the cognitive psychologist is both a scientist and a coach is an interesting one to consider. As a scientist, the
psychologist engages in the basic research of understanding the nature of skill acquisition, while as a coach, the psychologist applies an understanding of knowledge construction to human problem solving.


Program Models for Mainstreaming: Integrating Students With Moderate to Severe Disabilities
Edited by Michael S. Bors and Peter Knoblock
 Reviewed by Mildred G. Ness, Rochester, New York

The models of integration presented in this volume are testimony that an increasing number of school systems have found positive ways to interpret the "least restrictive environment" clause in Public Law 94-142. Throughout the chapters—each of which is written by different authors about different programs—there is evidence that the success of these models is due first and foremost to the attitudes and the problem-solving skills of the educators involved.

In a concise introduction, the editors give us the key to that attitude—"the view that it is always possible, and desirable, to educate students with moderate and severe disabilities in classrooms and programs with their nondisabled peers."

But this book does not rely on mere statements of principle. Nine credible cases are reviewed, each one an example of a different handicapping condition, and each one written by the people who have been directly involved with, and responsible for, changes made in their school, district, or area. The cases include programs for autistic, visually impaired, hard of hearing, orthopedically handicapped, and severely behaviorally disabled children. Contributors give a brief historical perspective and describe preparations made for change, problems faced, lessons learned, and future plans.

Although mainstreaming is a familiar concept, this edition has a fresher view, a stronger commitment, and a greater challenge than we have met before, and it impels the broadest possible interpretation: unconditional integration.


Teaching Thinking Skills: Theory and Practice
Edited by Joan Boykoff Baron and Robert J. Sternberg
 Reviewed by Jay McTighe, Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland

Inspired by presentations at the 1985 Connecticut State Thinking Conference, this book features 12 essays by prominent philosophers, cognitive psychologists, and educators. The title accurately conveys the contents, as classical and contemporary theories of thinking are explored in light of their classroom implications.

A five-section organization allows for a clustering of essays according to topic. Section one presents a rationale for teaching thinking and a framework of critical thinking abilities and dispositions. Five general approaches to teaching thinking are explored in section two. The third section examines three specific thinking skills programs, and evaluating thinking skills instruction is addressed in section four. The final section provides a synthesis of the volume in question-and-answer format.
The volume presents a provocative collection of the major ideas underlying the thinking skills movement. Educators interested in thinking about thinking will savor this assembly of ideas.

Available from Allyn and Bacon Inc., 7 Wells Ave., Newton, MA 02159.

### College: The Undergraduate Experience in America

**Ernest L. Boyer, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching**

*New York: Harper & Row, 1987*

Reviewed by Thomas R. McDaniel, Converse College, Spartanburg, South Carolina.

If you had unlimited financial resources and were charged with designing ideal undergraduate colleges, what would your places of higher learning look like? What purposes would they serve, and how would we know that your colleges were meeting the contemporary needs of America? These seem to be the questions addressed by the Carnegie Foundation's most recent inquiry into the health of our educational institutions. College: The Undergraduate Experience is Ernest L. Boyer's recent companion piece to the widely read *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*. Like the earlier report, this one presents a critical but hopeful view of education and, specifically, a view of what Boyer calls "a troubled institution," the undergraduate college.

What troubles the modern-day undergraduate college is a host of problems, shortcomings, mistakes, and inadequacies. Boyer concludes that "many of the nation's colleges are more successful in credentialing than in providing a quality education for their students." Further, there are conflicts and tension points on college campuses that impair effective undergraduate education. These concern transition from school to college, goals and curriculum, priorities of the faculty, conditions of learning and teaching, the quality of campus life, governance, assessment, and the con-
connection between the college and the outside world. So, says Boyer, "the American college is ... ready for renewal and there is an urgency to the task."

To renew the undergraduate college, the Foundation suggests a vast array of improvements, most of which are aimed at the tension points listed above. And most are also designed to create that "seamless web" of education that will virtually eliminate the barriers between school and college, between academic and social life on campus, between the college and the world, between the goals of promoting competence and character, and between individuality and community. The metaphor of the "seamless web," first introduced in High School, is pushed to its logical extreme in Boyer's treatise on college reform, for, as he sees it, the world "has become a more crowded, more interconnected, more unstable place."

It is difficult to disagree with Boyer's eloquent argument. How can we deny that colleges "should help students become independent, self reliant human beings, yet also they should give priority to community"? How can we refuse the notion that "the undergraduate experience is not only to study government, but to help shape a citizenry that can promote the public good"? We can't.

Indeed, there is much good sense and good advice in College—for parents, professors, presidents, and the public. The survey data (most of which seems to favor the independent liberal arts college) are fascinating and instructive. The examples and illustrations of colleges where successful practices may be found are refreshingly positive. Anecdotes, descriptions, and dialogues add to the interest and the readability of this attractive text.

And yet there are troublesome assumptions underlying the report's recommendations. One is that more is better. If ever a reform tract said that a college should do more to meet the demands of individuals and the community, this is it. There should be more dedication to teaching, more advising, more curriculum change, more foreign language, more emphasis on placement activities, more student involvement in governance, more assessment of programs—more of everything. Another assumption is that money is no object. Since college is, in the Jeffersonian tradition, the key to "groups of well-informed, caring individuals who band together in the spirit of community to learn from one another, to participate, as citizens, in the democratic process," no cost is too great. Provide access for minorities? Tailor independent study programs for working adults? Send students abroad? Set up grant programs and sabbatical leaves for faculty research? Certainly. No problem. Just do it. Finally, Boyer assumes that no choices have to be made. His world and its colleges are ideal types where balance always prevails, where interdependence and cooperation replace specialization and competition. His song is always both- and, never either-or. And "the perspective needed is not only national, but global."

The ideal world and the perfect college—the goal of a "seamless web"—can guide our thinking in an imperfect world that includes declining birthrates (i.e., enrollments), spiraling college costs, and hard choices for colleges. But for all its utopian ideals the Carnegie report on the undergraduate experience also inspires and informs, and for that we can be grateful.

Available from Harper & Row, 10 E. 55rd St., New York, NY 10022, for $19.95.