

Reviews

Assessing Students: How Shall We Know Them?

Derek Rowntree
New York.

Nichols Publishing Company, 1987

—Reviewed by Joan Boykoff Baron, Connecticut State Department of Education, Hartford, Connecticut.

The flavor of this book is very British, but the question of how to best assess students is very American. Be forewarned: you may begin to question your basic assumptions and beliefs about assessment. Useful at both theoretical and practical levels, this book will prompt you to consider the purposes and possible side-effects of assessment.

The sections on what to assess describe techniques for developing evaluative criteria and approaches to characterizing assessments on dimensions like formative-summative, process-product, and idiographic-nomothetic. Besides offering helpful suggestions on how to interpret and report data, Rowntree concludes with 17 concise and highly readable proposals that should be read by anyone concerned with "knowing one's students."

What distinguishes this book from others on student assessment is its thoughtfulness. Rowntree firmly believes in the value of assessments done well. Yet he alerts us to common pitfalls that we may both encounter or create along the way.

Available from Nichols Publishing Company, P.O. Box 96, New York, NY 10024, for \$21.50.

Electronic Learning: Issues and Teaching Ideas for Educational Computing, Television, and Visual Literacy

Dennis M. Adams and Mary Hamm
Springfield, Ill.:

Charles C Thomas, 1987

—Reviewed by L. Edward Lynn, Arlington Central School District, Poughkeepsie, New York.

In ancient Greece Plato was concerned that the written word would

replace speech as the dominant communication medium. Today handwriting and reading are still important skills for children to develop, but it is the cathode tube that propels much of our information.

Adams and Hamm point out that each successive communications medium has changed our relationship to the world of ideas and that electronic learning—television, microcomputers, videodiscs, artificial intelligence—is altering that relationship once again. The authors fervently believe that "when the new electronic media are coupled with effective teaching strategies, speech, writing, print and visual mediums can be enhanced," thereby contributing to the progress of mankind.

In this small volume (157 pages), Adams and Hamm compile information about electronic learning, provide examples of how to use the technology, and urge societal commitment to making the technology benefit children's learning.

Electronic Learning will appeal to educators desiring to become familiar with electronic media, but it does not satisfactorily address the crucial issue of how educators can make technological miracles beneficial to mankind.

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

Continuing to Learn: A Guidebook for Teacher Development

Susan Loucks-Horsley, Catherine K. Harding, Margaret A. Arbuckle, Lynn B. Murray, Cynthia Dubea, and Martha K. Williams
Andover, Mass.:

The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 1987

—Reviewed by Sarah D. Caldwell, Webster Groves School District, Webster Groves, Missouri.

"What are the characteristics of really good staff development programs? What are some alternative approaches, and how can the right ones be selected?" These questions provide the

framework for this guidebook.

In addition to surveying elements of comprehensive teacher development programs, the authors attempt to expand the reader's knowledge beyond use of the "workshop" as the primary means of providing teacher inservice education. They describe professional growth alternatives suitable for district- or school-level programs, including: teacher as researcher, clinical supervision, peer coaching, teacher advisers, teachers' centers, teaching institutes, networks, partnerships, and training of trainers. Research-based characteristics of effective staff development programs, which are the foundation of successful school and individual change efforts, are also detailed.

Action-oriented practitioners involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs for teacher development will find this an excellent resource.

Available from The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 290 S. Main St., Andover, MA 01810.

The Journal Book

Edited by Toby Fulwiler
Portsmouth, N.H.:

Heinemann Education Books, Inc., 1987

—Reviewed by Patricia M. Dombart, Butler Senior High School, Butler, Pennsylvania.

"When people write about something they learn it better." So states the editor of *The Journal Book*. The statement is both rationale and summary for this collection of essays on the use of journal writing in education.

Anyone involved in teaching, at any level, in any discipline, will benefit from reading this volume because it is not really about writing journals. It is about *teaching*—whether it be Victorian literature, physics, music, or skills and attitudes—and about *learning*—learning about such things as writing and thinking, or one's self, or even about learning to learn.

The contributions range from the helpful—the NCTE's "Guidelines for Using Journals in School Settings"—to the esoteric—"Dialectical Notebooks and the Audit of Meaning"; from the

predictable—"Respecting Opinions: Learning Logs in Middle School English"—to the unexpected—"Mathematics Journals: Fourth Grade." While each article is valuable in itself, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The book, as documentation of the commitment and the expertise of its contributors, delivers a bonus—a dash of inspiration. A work that provides both information and inspiration deserves a spot in a professional library.

Available from Heinemann Education Books, Inc., 70 Court St., Portsmouth, NH 03801, for \$16.

In the Nation's Image: Civic Education in Japan, the Soviet Union, the United States, France, and Britain

Edited by Edgar G. Gumbert
Atlanta

Center for Cross-cultural Education,
Georgia State University, 1987

—Reviewed by Lucien Ellington, University
of Tennessee at Chattanooga

The contributors to this book describe how citizens in their respective countries learn about nation and culture. Although contrasting cultures cause the paths of political socialization to differ, important forces other than family and school mold civic beliefs. With the exception of the Soviet Union, where the Communist party guides every aspect of life, mass electronic media sends messages to millions that are quite different from what is learned in the classroom.

Still, basic questions about citizenship remain, including the question of whether civic education exists primarily to create political consensus or to encourage political participation leading to meaningful change. In France, Great Britain, and perhaps to the greatest extent in our own country, proponents of civic education in schools divide into opposing camps over this issue.

The chapter by William Cummings, a pioneer in helping Westerners understand Japanese education, clearly depicts the relationship between the civic values acquired by most Japanese and both Japan's economic success and the Japanese people's post-war rejection of militarism. In another

chapter, Henry Giroux, one of the most articulate American proponents of economic and social change-oriented citizenship, eloquently describes the recent decline of this view of citizenship in the United States.

In the Nation's Image provides no neat answers for educators who deal directly with citizenship education, but it can raise the level of dialogue about the process.

Available from the Center for Cross-Cultural Education, Georgia State University, Urban Life Building, Atlanta, GA 30303, for \$10.95.

A Class Divided: Then and Now

William Peters

New Haven, Conn.

Yale University Press, 1987

—Reviewed by George Henderson, University of Oklahoma, Norman

This vivid account of the award-winning television documentary, "The Eye of the Storm," and its sequel remind us that racism is not a spectator sport. Within our schools and the world beyond, we are all—as Peters meticulously documents—actors in the institutional racism drama. More so than the original volume, this expanded edition addresses the consequences of altering racial beliefs and behaviors. Indeed, one can become desensitized in communities where black Americans are nonexistent. The author illustrates how well-meaning educators can unknowingly become what they claim not to be: racists.

If you are looking for foolproof techniques to rid your school system of racism, you won't find them here. You will find descriptions of Jane Elliott's strategy to strip people of their racial facade and render them publicly naked in their bigotry and ignorance. Then the strategy carefully and humanely provides understanding, empathy, and acceptance of ethnic minority groups. Ergo, this is sensitivity training at its best. In the end, we are left with Peters' question: will we apply Elliott's treatment—which consists, like Jonas Salk's polio vaccine, of a tiny dose of the disease? Reading this book is excellent preparation for becoming inoculated against racism.

Available from Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520, for \$25.00 (cloth), \$8.95 (paper).

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Educational Evaluation, 2d ed.

W. James Popham
Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:
Prentice Hall, 1987

—Reviewed by Thomas Hopkins, University
of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

As anyone who knows W. James Popham would expect, he doesn't attempt in the second edition of his textbook to cover all there is to educational evaluation. Rather, he concentrates on criterion-referenced test design and construction and related probability statistics and evaluation procedures. He discusses many other topics, but his focus is limited to his convictions. If all educational evaluators believed and behaved as his book instructs, educational evaluation would be infused with an element of fairness it does not now possess. This would especially be the case regarding evaluation of the education of minor-

ities with cultures differing from mainstream U.S. society. He succinctly and correctly, in my opinion, places norm-referenced achievement tests in their rightful place of limited use in the evaluation of education.

It is not Popham's style to equivocate on any topic, and he doesn't regard the evaluation of teachers. He boldly states that he doesn't believe teacher evaluation has progressed very far and, except for "professional judgment," is reluctant to make firm suggestions regarding it. Also, based on the record and the work of other authors, he states that educational evaluation has roots much older than President Johnson's war on poverty. Current educational evaluation has been influenced greatly by evaluation requirements of the federal government and its large-scale financing of education, but the activities related to evaluating education date back much further than 1965.

Organizationally, the new edition has some problems in that Popham's discussions of the politics of evaluation, the importance of professional judgment, and the new chapter 14 on instructional principles are almost afterwords. Yet they seem to temper all evaluation strategies and perhaps should be at the front rather than at the back of the book. He limits professional judgment to teacher evaluation, when in fact the book strongly implies that professional judgment is at the heart of educational evaluation and makes it what it is today. Nonetheless, the users of his book, and I recommend that there be a great many of these, can start with any chapter. Teachers of and practitioners of educational evaluation will find Popham's new edition a must.

Available from Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632.

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