

# LEADERSHIP

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## OVERVIEW

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

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It was Bob Marzano who first called my attention to the growing hunger of educators for a way to consolidate a disparate array of programs and practices. Marzano (p. 17), chief author of *TACTICS for Thinking* (1986) and *Dimensions of Thinking* (1988), has conducted hundreds of workshops where he has tried to explain how teaching thinking fits with mastery learning, Hunter's elements of teaching, writing across the curriculum, cooperative learning, and so on.

It's no wonder educators are looking for ways to integrate these ideas. In the years since Sputnik, we've been pushed this way and that by a relentless stream of reforms. It began with the innovations of the 1960s: team teaching, the ungraded primary, modular scheduling, instructional television, teaching machines, inquiry teaching. Then came curriculum development projects in mathematics and science, which in turn were upstaged by desegregation, student rights, and equity, followed by back-to-basics, accountability, effective schools, and the effective teaching research.

In the last decade, teachers in school systems that have kept pace with new developments have been subjected to high-powered training programs. Most of these programs are well designed and useful, but the gaps and conflicts among them are troublesome. For me the situation evokes memories of the early 1970s, when I knew teachers who were teaching both "Individually Prescribed Instruction" and "Man: A Course of Study," programs using very different methods and based on quite different theories of learning.

Some observers, including Lambert (1989), say the real problem is the conception of staff development as a collection of courses by which teachers are trained to implement other people's ideas. Each such course is necessarily grounded in a particular point of view and, because these orientations are often quite different, these observers say this form of staff development forces teachers to resist some programs as incompatible with their values or else to switch professional ideologies now and then like so many compliant windmills on a Kansas prairie.

Other leaders defend packaged courses as the only practical way to condense and make available to harried practitioners a growing body of professional knowledge. But they, too, are concerned about the disjointed nature of many inservice programs and want to integrate seemingly unrelated pieces. They seek a framework that will enable them and other staff members to see "the big picture" and to add more elements to the picture as they emerge.

Several of the articles in this issue are the work of knowledgeable trainers who sense the need for a more comprehensive framework and who offer their versions for consideration. Perhaps none of these designs is fully satisfactory at this point, but the search for a broader paradigm is exciting and potentially rewarding.

Education is a complex activity, not readily represented in a conceptual scheme. But when an insightful analysis helps us discover relationships among ideas and practices, we gain perspective. We think more clearly about which practices we can use to accomplish which purposes—as well as which we prefer *not* to use, and why. Having a repertoire of strategies that is more than just a random collection gives us a sense of efficacy. It enables us to set priorities, and to forge meaningful connections of our own. In short, it makes us more professional. □

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