

Reviews



We Can Rescue Our Children: The Cure for Chicago's Public School Crisis—With Lessons for the Rest of America

Herbert J. Walberg, Michael J. Bakalis,
Joseph L. Bast, and Steven Baer
Chicago

URF Educational Foundation, 1988

—Reviewed by Roy R. Pellicano, Brooklyn,
New York

We Can Rescue Our Children provides political and social background for understanding the current debate to reform Chicago's public school system. After a devastating critique of the structure and function of Chicago's schools, the authors argue that the combination of parental choice and decentralization will produce systemic accountability while fostering both equity and excellence.

In their view, decentralization involves (1) redefining the powers of the central Board of Education, and (2) founding a "Local School Governing Council" in each of Chicago's public schools. Consisting of the principal, six parents, six teachers, and six community members, the council will develop a school improvement plan, hire and fire the principal, approve teacher hiring, set curriculum policy, control building and grounds, and prepare and approve the school budget. With regard to choice, the authors carefully prepared a proposal for parental choice and school accountability based upon "education rebates"—not tax credits, deductions, or vouchers. While increasing the competitiveness of the public schools by systematizing both incentives and disincentives, the

education rebates will empower parents to opt for private schools.

We Can Rescue Our Children offers a bipartisan proposal that addresses the issues of excellence, equity, and choice as they affect all urban public schools.

Available from The Heartland Institute, 59 E. Van Buren, Suite 810, Chicago, IL 60605.

Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts

Ray Budde
Andover, Mass.

Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands

—Reviewed by William J. Leary, Broward County Public Schools, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Reorganizing public school districts to better encourage learning by the entire community is the theme of Ray Budde's study. Anyone contemplating a new concept for the organization of a school district, he points out, must confront 300 years of history and tradition in American education.

Budde creates a mythical school superintendent to introduce his 10-year plan, or "charter," for organizational change in "Hometown Public Schools." With this charter, the superintendent of Hometown obtained agreements from teachers and others to rethink and to plan how a school district can better offer its services to students.

For example, teachers might write an individual elementary school charter to establish a language arts program. In addition to planning the curriculum, the teachers would also develop a request for funding the project. Extra stipends would be built in, such as fees for expenses, registration for workshops, and consultant costs. The teachers would then submit the funding plan to the local school board for review.

If substantial change is to occur in school organizations, many members

of the body politic will have to participate in the deliberations and planning. Perhaps a charter would be one vehicle for a realistic change process to occur.

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

Conflicts of Interest—The Politics of American Education

Joel Spring
New York
Longman Inc., 1988

—Reviewed by William J. Leary, Broward County Public Schools, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Political control of public education in our nation has been a historic conflict among national, state, local, and private interests. Issues such as power and income cause internal conflict in American education, according to the author, while language, religion, curriculum, funding, and educational opportunities reflect external conflict.

The author also considers the major role of courts and how they have influenced control of public education. He describes, for example, how minorities, because of their limited political power, have turned to the court system to generate change. Minorities, as defined by the author, include the categories of religious, racial, linguistic, and handicapped.

The major issue of political control, though, concerns who decides what will be taught in our schools. Majority control in the democratic process limits what is taught in schools because minority viewpoints in such areas as politics, culture, and social organization are generally excluded from the curriculum. Therefore, majority control limits the free discussion of ideas in a participatory democratic system.

Public schools, the author points out, have in reality become a battle-

ground for interest groups seeking to have knowledge imparted that benefits their particular concerns. Those interested in how political control of public education results in continuous conflict for power will enjoy Spring's review.

Available from Longman Inc., 95 Church St., White Plains, NY 10601-1505, for \$14.95.

Learning Styles: Quiet Revolution in American Secondary Schools

Rita Dunn and Shirley A. Griggs
Reston, Va.

National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1988

—Reviewed by Shirley A. McFaul, Lewis University, Romeoville, Illinois

Professors Dunn and Griggs, committed to the concept of teaching according to learning styles, visited 10 middle schools and high schools in the U.S. where such programs are offered. The schools visited were large and small, urban and rural, public and private, in nine states. This 79-page monograph reports how the programs got started, observations and conversations with participants, and conclusions and recommendations for each school. Each report is approximately six pages long, so it contains limited information but does give an address and contact person at each site. As a network for teachers involved in this approach, it is useful.

The major shortcoming of the monograph is its bias. The authors claim that the myriad reform proposals will not improve learning—only instruction through individual learning styles will work. Their school visits offered "proof" to them that they were correct. They described the teachers they saw as "the pioneers of our decade" and found students whose "responses were universally laudatory." The authors created many of the instruments and strategies these teach-

ers used, and all the information reported came through "stories" and "observation." No hard research is reported. If improved schools evolved, it is not certain the specific learning styles approach caused it. Given the same time and commitment, other approaches might also work. The authors tell readers to monitor their interpretations, for "we need your objective perceptions." With that, I agree.

Available from National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091.

Teacher Assessment

Association of Teacher Educators
Reston, Va.

Association of Teacher Educators, 1988

—Reviewed by Jerrold D. Hopfengardner, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio

The motivation for assessment is positive. It can be productive, but only if done with care, intelligence, and fairness (p. v).

This timely and readable monograph is "must" reading for educators as well as laypersons serving on boards and advisory committees. The convictions of the ATE Commission on Teacher Assessment about teacher assessment and evaluation issues are addressed from a practical perspective in refreshing, realistic, and positive language. The content is synthesized in five basic recommendations at the conclusion of the monograph. A list of state-mandated testing of prospective teachers is also provided.

Although not always clearly differentiated, both the summative and the formative dimensions of teacher assessment are considered. The point is explicitly made that evaluation to improve teaching is clearly different from standardized assessment. Also, a recurring theme is that the success of assessment programs is contingent upon a high degree of mutual trust and

respect between teachers and their evaluators.

The state-of-the-art discussion and recommendations can serve as a conceptual base and as a prerequisite to considering specific strategies for planning and conducting a comprehensive teacher assessment program.

Available from Association of Teacher Educators, 1900 Association Dr., Suite ATE, Reston, VA 22091.

Program Design and Development for Gifted and Talented Students

Frederick B. Tuttle, Jr., Laurence A. Becker, and Joan A. Sousa
Washington, D.C.

National Education Association, 1988

—Reviewed by Margaret M. Gibson, North Brunswick, New Jersey

Education for the gifted and talented has long been controversial. The authors present a clear, concise rationale for educating this school population and dispel many of the myths surrounding the controversy; for example, "The gifted will succeed anyway" and "Something is better than nothing."

This third edition contains a brief but comprehensive account of appropriate curricular models. Some, like Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model and Guilford's Structure of the Intellect Model, are well known. Others, the Pyramid Project for example, are not as widely known but are noteworthy. The Pyramid Project, under the leadership of the Gifted Students Institute for Research and Development, provides for the gifted and talented in all content areas on a daily basis.

Educators and administrators now have an invaluable source on all important issues in educating the gifted and talented—from initiating a program to stimulating differentiated activities to program evaluation.

Available from National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, for \$8.95.

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