

Focus On Learning

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EDITORIAL VIEWS . . .

Before I go any further, a word of reassurance to those of you out there who, like me, could muddle through very nicely, thank you, without hearing so much as another syllable about educational ideas that are *supposed* to be important to the teacher in the classroom: This is not going to be just another collection of *those* articles. So stay with me. Another main difference of this issue is its scope.

We begin with one of the more recognizable names on the educational circuit, Mary Anne Raywid, our Educator in Focus, and a capsule history of her involvement and achievements in education is followed by Professor Raywid's recommendation "that a move away from a 'common' school, and in the direction of a system of alternative educations, is the least change necessary to make substantial in-roads on the problems plaguing schools." Now, all educational recommendations that are truly meaningful are more than a mere combination of words—they contain a message and they present us with a challenge. Professor Raywid's message is based "on the assumption that different kinds of students will require different educational treatments and environments" while her challenge directs professional educators to be the inside force behind this concept of schooling.

For all his dissatisfaction with our schools, Martin S. Friedman, author of our lead article, "Freedom, Decidophobia and Strategies of Students," still loves teaching; he only laments the lack of freedom available to students and maintains that the classroom helps to make us less capable of making moral decisions. Friedman himself is change-oriented as is his philosophy of education, and he does opt for giving the students more autonomy and decision-making-roles in the system. Professor Friedman draws a clear distinction between the process of teaching and the role of student strategies by showing, using meaningful quotations from the literature, how present practices of traditional schooling are damaging in that they tend to create a certain kind of environment: individualistic, oriented toward cognitive achievement, imposing dependency on, and withholding authority and responsibility from those in the role of students.

I count that time lost in which some part of my professional reading does not leave me solely puzzled, or give me something to brood about, or, at the very least, give me hope about the future of education. Rarely, however, have I been so optimistic as I was after reading "Philosophy on the Pre-College Level: Content or Methodology?" which was penned by Margaret Ann Sharp who is the assistant director of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State College. Optimistic because it heralds the dawning of a new and more realistic consciousness, not only about the value and uses of philosophy but, more importantly, the role of curriculums in getting students to think for themselves and face their problems. For anyone with an interest in such matters, especially where philosophy is concerned, the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children has performed an indispensable service in publishing information and materials on how to achieve these goals. The institute is, so far as I know, the first of its kind devoted to bringing philosophy into the public classroom and Ann Sharp's writings, including her previously published books, sets a standard, one hopes, similarly concerned educators will try to meet. She notes that "It is one thing to be adept at interpreting what children say on a logical, psychological, or socio-logical basis and helping them to develop their awareness within these limits, it is quite another thing to appreciate the philosophical dimension of what is being said and systematically aid children to come to their own views about philosophical matters." Whereupon, she persuades us that philosophy for children ought to provide both a content and a methodological approach to the teaching of the material and, on reading her thoughts, we believe in every stubborn point she

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EDUCATOR IN FOCUS . . .

Mary Anne Raywid, our Educator in Focus for this issue, received her undergraduate degree in history and English from the University of North Carolina, her M.A. in political science, and later her Ph.D. in foundations of education from the University of Illinois.

She is currently Professor of Philosophy of Education at Hofstra University, where she is the director of the Project on Alternatives in Education and director of Hofstra's new Center for the Study of Educational Alternatives.

She has been president of the John Dewey Society, and the Middle Atlantic States Philosophy of Education Society, and has served on the executive boards of the Philosophy of Education Society and the American Educational Studies Association.

Most recently, she has been elected vice-president and president-elect of the Society of Professors of Education.

*Professor Raywid is on the editorial boards of six leading journals in education, has published numerous articles dealing with social and philosophical issues in the classroom, and her text, *The Ax-Grinders*, was recognized as one of five "Outstanding Education Books of 1962," by the National Education Association.*



Photo by Scott Scheele

MARY ANNE RAYWID

In the course of the past several years, a number of my views on education have undergone rather extensive change. And my conception of my own role has changed as well. It is a shift something short of a career change—but enough of a move to represent some very new activities and a lot of new learnings.

I have become increasingly convinced over the last several years that a move away from a "common" school, and in the direction of a system of alternative educations, is the least change necessary to make substantial in-roads on the problems plaguing schools. I am not sure that I see such a system as an enduring ideal—after the fashion of the

models we are sometimes tempted to construct *in vacuo*, irrespective of time and place and circumstance. But an alternative system for education seems to me the best arrangement we can devise for today, given the particular conditions and problems confronting us.

We all frame our suggestions out of our personal construction of urgencies. The conditions and problems which strike me as most compelling—as what must stand as critical considerations in the search for new solutions—relate to school conditions as well as to situations within the larger society. Among the most pressing elements of the school conditions are:

- (1) The substantial number of youngsters for whom standard programs appear ill-suited — and the growing reasonableness of the proposition that if all are compelled by law to attend, then it is incumbent upon the school to assure some positive accomplishment for all.
- (2) Growing public disenchantment with the schools, and growing testimony that they are not succeeding as well as many believe they should be.
- (3) An awareness of the enormous obstacles to bringing durable change to any school or classroom.
- (4) The rather predictable distaste for school among students — the good ones as well as the poor — and, increasingly, also among many of the other human beings who spend a large share of their waking hours in schools.
- (5) The increasing use of the schools as the arena for realizing public policy commitments — such as the equalization of opportunity and outcome, and the eradication of segregation based on race, sex, handicap or disability.

My list of the broader factors outside schools to which an educational reform plan must effectively respond would include at least these considerations:

- (1) The erosion of the shared values and commitments which must undergird a common school — and the cultural fragmentation which that implies.
- (2) An increasing assertiveness on the part of various identity groups within society, tied to escalated expectations regarding individual rights to satisfaction and a consequent unwillingness to compromise.
- (3) A growing Populist - Consumerist - Voluntarist trend likely to remove from professional jurisdiction a number of the functions and prerogatives professionals have claimed — and particularly such marginally qualified professions as education.

The foregoing do not pretend to comprehensiveness and there are surely other criteria which adequate educational solutions must also address. But for me, these count as focal concerns in seeking solutions for current educational ills. In retrospect, I can identify them as contributants to the emerging conviction on my part that a move to alternative educations is our brightest current prospect.

Accordingly, a great deal of my professional effort currently goes to trying to launch a study of educational alternatives which would constitute a contemporary parallel to the Eight-Year Study. The venture began within the John Dewey Society and has to date received support also from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the John Dewey Foundation. In addition, several professional organizations have endorsed the Project on Alternatives in Education — including the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Study of School Evaluation, and the National Association of State Boards of Education. Proposals for help with further planning, and for early phases of the inquiry, are currently before several private foundations and government agencies. And work has already begun on some of the earliest phases of the inquiry.

Policy for the Project on Alternatives in Education (PAE) is set by its ten-member Steering Committee (John Bremer, Mario Fantini, John Goodlad, Lynne Miller, Vernon Smith, Charles Speiker, Bob Stake, Ralph Tyler, Arthur Wirth, and myself). The Committee determined from the start to use the Eight-Year Study as a model of sorts. PAE will seek to aid the alternatives movement in secondary education as the earlier study sought to aid Progressive Education — i.e., through careful, comprehensive inquiry designed to distinguish good and effective practice from that which is not. There are differences in our research plans. Changed circumstances

have recommended a number of modifications, and we hope too that our plans will benefit from the lessons of the Eight-Year Study. But the general strategy is the same: looking to a definitive landmark inquiry as a guide to changing the schools — and simultaneously, to creating the climate essential to the acceptance, support, and maintenance of the new forms.

Several features of the research plan mark interesting departures from common practice. One is that instead of seeking a consensus of educational goals which can then stand as the criteria for measuring the success of any and all programs examined, we hope to begin by ascertaining the education-related values of the various identity groups prominent in contemporary society — not just goals, but other educationally-pertinent values as well — and not with an eye to forging agreement among them, but with explicating multiple sets. We plan to use all the statements thus generated in assessing all the programs examined. Each program will thus be measured on values and expectations it has not chosen — but each is also assured a chance for assessment in relation to its own values.

The Project's Steering Committee has spoken of a "congeries of inquiries," given our desire to use multiple research strategies and procedures. We hope to look at processes as well as products, at programs as well as their outcomes, at administrative and organizational structures as well as at curricula and activities, at teachers and students and parents and their attitudes and feelings in relation to their programs. One of the inquiry strategies I find particularly hopeful is that proceeding on the assumption that different kinds of students will require different educational treatments and environments. To my knowledge, this is a first for educational reform: the starting assumption, that is, that no one proposal will suffice for all or even 'generally.' Despite deference to individual differences, educational re-

form strategies from Quintillian to the Eight-Year Study have presupposed that the right answers to educational questions will be right in relation to all or most learners. (Even the reform plan of individualized instruction rather quickly settled into a proposal for having *all* youngsters approach learning on a solitary basis via assignment packages — albeit differentiated packages.) The Project of Alternatives in Education aspires, however, to generate data to the effect that Type 1 programs seem effective with Type X learners, Type 2 programs seem to work better with Type Y learners, etc.

In this way, the Project hopes to facilitate the matching of particular educational practices and environments, to particular kinds of learners on the one hand, and to particular patterns of parental values on the other. The hope is to lay the bases for a set of alternatives within each community among which parents and their children can select. Hopefully our findings will encourage school districts to establish such options, will suggest which options ought to be made available within which districts, and will aid families in selecting among the existing choices.

There is not much that is modest about our hopes! Moreover, the longer I live with them, the more new spin-off questions they keep generating for me which I wish there were more time to pursue. I'm working on a collection of articles offering a variety of alternatives to the scientific paradigm in epistemology. And I've a start on a collection of writings by alternative school advocates who share doubts about the centrality of student decision-making to desirable programs. I've a monograph underway on alternatives to the bureaucratic organizational pattern for schools. And along the way, more and more questions keep popping up that I would like to address carefully and at length. The Hidden Curriculum tops this list at present. I see it as the place to look for those long-range sorts of educational goals like

wisdom, virtue, and judgment which are posed to the proximate purposes which education's ultimate purposes — as occupy behaviorists and accountabilists. A more recent question for me is how to teach people how to go about learning from experience. (We have study guides on how to learn from words — oral or written. What would a study guide look like for how to learn from experience?) Along with these, recent censorship controversies and other struggles have

drawn me back to some of the problems which first absorbed me in *The Ax-Grinders* years ago. So all in all, my days are not long enough. It is a scholar's paradise, with fascinating questions cropping up everywhere. With the responsibility associated with the Project, however, and the continuing teaching commitments which also occupy me, the one-armed paperhanger sometimes appears to be operating in relatively fine shape!

EDITORIAL VIEWS (Continued from page 2)

makes.

Our third selection, Roberta Weiner's "Sex Stereotyping in Children's Readers and Textbooks" reflects a justified impatience with sex-biased education materials and asks for a one hundred eighty degree turn — a more realistic view of the role of women in our society. She claims that it is "not surprising given the attitudes transmitted through children's books, that although girls perform better in school than boys, outstanding life achievements are rarer in women than in men." Of course, the author does not suggest that educational materials are incapable of change, nor does she assume that one obtains biased-free educational material simply by starting out interested in the problem and staying with it. Instead she recognizes that every teacher begins with biases and must eventually struggle to reach beyond them toward some objectivity. That is the only way it which it can be done. Weiner's direct, no-nonsense approach does have a certain tone of authority. For those who are really serious about getting something done, Professor Weiner's checklist for evaluating sexism in readers offers them a functional tool in identifying a sex-biased textbook.

In the final two selections, we change direction: a move away from the social and philosophic problems of the classroom into questions and solutions as they apply to the curriculum, specifically, mathematics and science. Now the exact relation that obtains between language and mathematics is, like most questions

having to do with the application of language itself, sometimes simple and straightforward and sometimes oblique and contradictory. No fixed approach to the question is ever likely to suffice for long which is one reason you will want to read "Looking at the Language of Mathematics." According to the authors, "to teach mathematics as an abstract and intellectual exercise apart from communication skills is to isolate this subject from its very real function in ordinary events."

What is good and right and praiseworthy about our final section by Sister Mary Virginia Orna, which is an account of the genesis, implementation and follow-through of a new science curriculum, is that we end up believing in her results. And nothing could be more important than that. Finally, the information to be obtained from our Review section is of many kinds. It is impossible, of course, to report in detail what these reviews contain, but a look at the material might, nonetheless, suggest the range of research that has gone into their writing.

Allow me to conclude by saying that we are somewhat late in getting this issue to you as we moved into a modern educational center which has, at the very least, put us behind in meeting this deadline. William Emerson once said that "punctuality is dangerous, it's a bully, but even worse, it is the thief of time." True. Next time, however, we will be on time.

E.F.T.