

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

The schools are at it again. With vociferous approval from the press and the public, they are talking more and more about requiring "grade level standards" for promotion. Of course, students who don't attain them are not "failed," or even "retained" (which used to be our favorite euphemism); they are "given an opportunity for extended time."

Well, it may work, but I doubt it. Somehow, euphemisms never seem to comfort anyone except those who use them.

Some of us remember when Walter Cook and others studied the effects of what he used to call "hoarding your poor students" by not promoting them. One of these consequences was a lowering of averages; if some fifth graders were retained (transitioned?), and tested again, and if their scores were averaged in with the new fifth graders, would they raise the average or lower it? It may be that schools that revert to this policy will find themselves once again showing up more poorly than comparable schools.

We could cheat, of course. Pupils in "transitional" (we don't want to say "remedial," do we?) classes could be excluded—their scores, I mean; we wouldn't dream of excluding the children themselves.

One part of this farce might work—the old familiar threat motivation. There are some indications that it's working already—for the time being. If we threaten the kids with failure (pardon me, "retention" or "extended time") they may work harder, and their scores may rise—for the nonce.

Will the scores stay high? The evidence from the past is not reassuring.

Arthur Adkins
Associate Professor
University of Maryland
College Park

Dear Editor:

I just clipped out of your December issue the article by Frances Holliday and Carole Edwards on "Building on Cultural Strengths: A Route to Academic Achievement" [EL, December 1978, pp. 207-10]. I will use it as one more of many illustrations I have collected on the values of cross-age teaching situations.

A few private school systems, including ours, operate numerous small schools with multigrade classrooms. The teacher-pupil ratio might average something like 1:15. It sometimes amazes me when I hear of school officials announcing the proposal to "close small schools" because such schools "cannot possibly produce quality education." Beka books recently published *Where the Rainbows Wait* by Jones and Stowers, which dramatizes the frustrations in a little Texas community when the state authorities apparently proposed to close a one-room school.

Consolidations have not been shown to significantly produce better academics. Everyone enjoys nicer facilities and usually finds equipment helpful. But none of these has been shown to be a great asset in actually producing better "quality education."

Observations of accomplishments in our one- and two-room schools, as compared with our larger schools, during the past several decades, have enabled us to draw a few positive conclusions. Systemwide achievement test scores seem to average about the same, which is usually slightly above the national results. Significant differences appear in attitudes. Children who have responsibilities assisting the teacher often seem to relate better to that teacher, to fellow students, and even to their parents. The human need for self-importance is considerably aided in the type of "family" setting that the article describes. And, more than once in my classroom experience, did I bow to the ability of a child

"getting through" to another child where I had failed. Believe me, this did something for the tutor, as well as for the teacher.

Melvin E. Northrup
Associate Education Director
Central Union Conference of
Seventh-Day Adventists
Lincoln, Nebraska

Dear Editor:

Doyle Watts' article in the November issue of *Educational Leadership* ["The Humanistic Approach to Teacher Education: A Giant Step Backward?" pp. 87-90] brought out some critical issues in the area of teacher effectiveness. His points, related to the vagueness of the recommendations put forth in the article by Art Combs, were well stated. I feel that teachers expect specific suggestions related to improving their effectiveness in the classroom.

Here in Kern County, we work with the Office for Equal Opportunity in the Classroom Master Teacher Inservice Program. This program teaches educators the 15 behaviors of a master teacher. We use videotape segments of a classroom scene to demonstrate each behavior. Teachers appreciate specific help in improving their teaching techniques.

Doug Fletcher, Director
Curricular Services
Kern County Public Schools
Bakersfield, California

Dear Editor:

How modern is Arthur Foshay's editorial about the basics in December [*EL*, "It Could Work Better," pp. 163-65]. It makes me shake my head in wonderment that after all these years Foshay would have to remind us that children "should

first become acquainted with reality before attempting to deal with it abstractly."

And how about his reminder that the basics include a valid view of oneself? I continue to read him with delight and appreciation.

Merrill Harmin
Professor
Southern Illinois University
Edwardsville

Dear Editor:

The article "Fear in the Schools: How Students Make Teachers Afraid" by Carl E. Pickhardt [*EL*, November 1978, pp. 107-12] is outstanding. May I have permission to duplicate it for distribution to all teacher-interns enrolled in an introductory educational psychology course along with their student teaching?

Patricia A. Nolen
Associate Professor
Educational Psychology
University of Washington
Seattle

Editors note: We are pleased when educators find our articles useful, so beginning with this issue we grant advance permission to reproduce material from Educational Leadership. See page 402 for conditions.

Dear Editor:

Our administrators have read with interest your December issue of *Educational Leadership*. Several of the articles . . . focus exactly on our present concerns and discussions with our staff.

As members of ASCD and subscribers to *Educational Leadership* we appreciate your theme articles, and we feel they provide an opportunity

(continued on page 426)

Future ASCD Annual Conferences

1980	March 29-April 2	Atlanta	Georgia World Congress Center
1981	March 7-11	St. Louis	Congress Center
1982	March 20-24	Anaheim	Convention Center

Properly introduced to the idea, teachers are receptive to supervision according to the experience described here. Teachers support and have reacted favorably to the implementation of clinical supervision when a peer is a member of the supervisory team. This, perhaps, reemphasizes some principles that enlightened administrators and supervisors have recognized for quite some time. In brief, teachers are more receptive to supervision: when they have helped to determine

its purposes and procedures; when the supervision is for the purpose of assisting them to do a better job and not for evaluation; and, when the problems being worked on are, indeed, the teacher's problems as he/she perceives them.

Whether it serves as a waystation in a larger school system between the traditional supervisor role and its potential or as a low-cost substitute in a smaller, less affluent system, the clinical supervision/peer observation team design described here may be seen as an effective catalyst for changing teacher opinion. Principals who recognize the problem of supervision acceptance and supervisors who desire a more effective response from teachers may welcome this design or similar clinical peer panel approaches for bringing about positive teacher attitude changes toward supervision.

LETTERS

(continued from page 372)

for expanded discussion of crucial educational concerns.

Gary L. Payne
Superintendent
Wyoming City Schools
Wyoming, Ohio

Dear Editor:

I have not always been enamored with our professional journal, *Educational Leadership*. Some of the issues have been less than stimulating and have had little relevance to the real world I live and work in. Part of the problem is the overly sentimental, syrupy, so-called "humanistic" philosophy which pervades our journal.

Anyway, the December issue of *Educational Leadership* was a refreshing change for the better. Let's have more down-to-earth, helpful, practical articles as this issue contains. And please let us continue to hear more viewpoints than one.

Richard H. Hart
Director of Instruction
Scappoose, Oregon



Elmer C. Ellis (top left) is Professor of Education, Valdosta State College, Valdosta, Georgia; Joseph T. Smith (top right) is President SOWEGA Educational Management Consultants, Inc., Albany, Georgia; and William Harold Abbott, Jr., is Principal, G. O. Bailey Elementary School, Tifton, Georgia.

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