

# What Some Schools and Classrooms Teach

JOHN I. GOODLAD

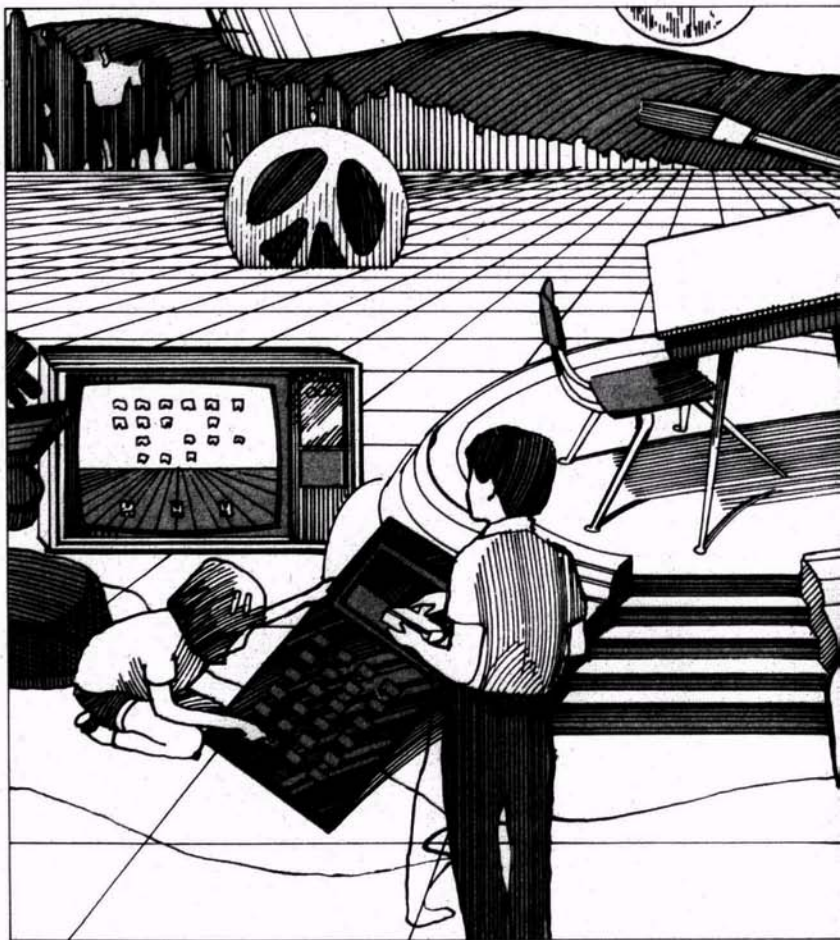
My interest is, has been, and will continue to be in improving education, especially in schools. I am interested in understanding schools so that others and I might use whatever insight is gained in order to improve schools. Any measure of success one has in improving something depends heavily on understanding it.

It was in this spirit that my colleagues and I launched "A Study of Schooling." We have described the sample and the methodology elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> In brief, "A Study of Schooling" is an inquiry into school "triples"—elementary schools connecting with junior highs and junior highs connecting with senior highs—in seven widely scattered states. The method is an amalgam of traditional techniques: interviews, questionnaires, observations, and, particularly in the curriculum domain, collections of documents.

A few characteristics make the study unique. First, it endeavors to examine more or less simultaneously a great many of the commonplaces of schooling: goals, teaching practices, curricular content, school and classroom organization, materials used, problems and issues, rules and regulations, and so on. Second, we sought to view these commonplaces from the perspectives of students, teachers, parents, principals, and others. Third, we sought not only to see these commonplaces through the eyes of these groups but also to gain some insight into the satisfactions, dissatisfactions, values, and attitudes of our re-

spondents. Fourth, as a result of this approach, we gathered an extraordinary volume of data about each school in the sample. For example, we have detailed observations of 129 elementary, 362

junior high, and 525 senior high classes, the largest number of classes ever observed in one study, I believe. The resulting data bank provides an opportunity to study not only the actors and



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things pertaining to schools but also the fascinating relationships among them.

The findings in any one of the many elements of schooling we examined are not markedly different from the findings

*Illustration: William J. Kircher and Associates*



of those who previously have studied these elements separately. The usefulness of the Study, then, is not so much what it contributes to such commonly studied phenomena as classroom teaching but what it adds to our insight into the relationships among these elements and into the functioning of schools as social institutions.

We are prone to regard schools as goal-oriented factories engaged in processing human materials. But no matter how much we seek to reduce goals to specific operations and to redesign the programs of instruction to emphasize these operations, the most important thing about school for the children and youth who go there is the living out of their daily personal and social lives, not academics. There is not one set of goals; there are many. The curriculum and the methods of teaching from class to class may be virtually uniform, but the ambience of each class differs. Indeed, the ambience of each school differs. These differences appear to have more to do with the quality of life and, indeed, the quality of education in schools than do the explicit curriculum and the methods of teaching.

If we can only understand schools clearly in our minds, we might be more successful in improving them. We might then understand why changing the method of teaching reading, for example, accounts for so little in the variance of reading scores. We might then understand why helping teachers better use their present methods of teaching produces such modest outcomes. Substituting a cultural model of schooling for the prevailing production model profoundly changes how we think about schools and significantly influences how we study and seek to improve them. Such a model turns our attention to what schools do and leads us to wonder why.

#### **What Schools Are For**

Let me turn, now, to two questions: What are schools asked to do and what do schools do? Comparing the answers to these two questions inevitably raises a third: What should schools do?

We sought to answer the first of these questions by examining the goals stated or implied in documents produced by the 50 states and the districts in which the schools we studied were located. We sought to study the second of these

questions—that is, what schools do—by examining the materials used by teachers, the tests and quizzes they gave, as well as by observing hour after hour in the classrooms of our sample. In addition, we obtained some useful insights from some of the questions we asked on questionnaires and in interviews.

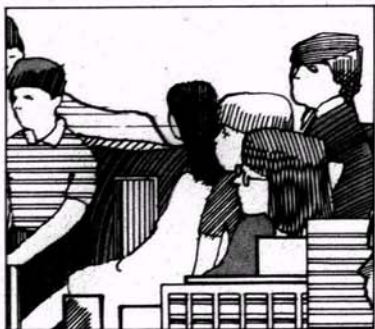
I confine myself here almost exclusively to the formal and operational curricula—that is, the curricula of artifacts and the curricula we observed—but we derived some useful insights also from data on teachers' stated intentions and students' perceptions. The conceptual framework for analyzing these several curricula is described elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> We recognized, however, that there is both an explicit and an implicit curriculum. The latter sometimes is referred to as the "hidden curriculum" but this term is, I think, misleading. It is little more hidden than is the explicit curriculum of textbooks and workbooks. Describing the implicit curriculum is tricky in that it is largely inferred from the handling of the explicit curriculum and from expectations, rules, and regulations that are not always made explicit.

Clearly, what children and youth learn from the implicit curriculum is derived, in large part, from teaching procedures and techniques in use. I shall make a few generalizations about teaching for purposes of rounding out the picture but my colleague, Kenneth Sirotnik, has provided a more comprehensive picture in a report on our findings in this area.<sup>3</sup>

#### **What Schools Are Asked to Do**

Our analysis of state documents unearthed the broadest and most idealistic expectations for schools as well as high-level agreement among the states at a general level. The goals fit into four broad categories: academic, social and citizenship, vocational, and personal. The intent for each of these areas is defined with considerable clarity in a series of sub-categories on which there also is considerable state-to-state agreement.

Most of the state documents, following some philosophical preamble, began with statements such as "develop the ability to read, write, and handle basic arithmetical operations." Consistent with this stated goal priority, most states then went on to identify the subject fields or learnings through which



these goals were to be developed. The most frequently listed were language skills, mathematics, science, social studies, interpersonal skills and topics derived from civics and the behavioral sciences, and the arts—in this order. One would expect these priorities to be reflected in school curricula. This tended to be the case for the schools of our sample.

Most of the state documents we examined mentioned with considerable and almost equal frequency goals pertaining to vocational or career education, citizenship, and emotional and physical well-being. Our data reveal substantial allocation of time and teachers to subjects presumably related to such goals, particularly at the junior and senior high school levels.

We begin to see, then, a degree of parallelism between the states' commitments to academic, vocational, social and citizenship, and personal goals and the average distribution of time and teachers to the subject fields in our sample. However, school-to-school variation, especially in regard to science, social studies, and the arts at the elementary level and to vocational education at the secondary, was substantial.

But a careful analysis of the states' goals for education raises in one's mind some serious questions about the parallelism between what many of these statements convey and what goes on in schools and classrooms. The second statement commonly appearing under academic goals is worded somewhat as follows: "Develop the ability to communicate ideas through writing and speaking." Further down the list we find these statements: "Develop the ability to use and evaluate knowledge" and "develop positive attitudes toward intellectual activity, including intellectual curiosity and a desire for further learning."

These goals convey to me an image of students writing essays and narratives, engaging in dialogue with one another and with their teachers, initiating inquiry into questions not resolved by teachers or in their own minds, and so on. But this is not the picture that emerges from our data. Indeed, the picture is of students passively listening, reading textbooks, completing assignments, and rarely initiating anything—at least in the academic subjects.

Under social, civic, and cultural goals, there is much mention of skill in communicating effectively in groups, advancing the goals and concerns of others, and developing the ability to form productive and satisfying relations with others. But my impressions from the data on the schools we studied are quite opposite. I see, rather, students working alone, although in group settings, in competition with one another, and rarely engaging in anything likely to advance the school goals and concerns of their peers.

The state goals include a highly idealistic array pertaining to democratic processes, enculturation, truth and values, moral integrity, effective use of leisure time, personal flexibility, creativity and aesthetic expression, self-confidence, and the setting of life goals, particularly pertaining to continued learning. My general conclusion from our data is that the schools we studied did not place a high premium on experiencing democratic processes, independent thinking, creativity, personal autonomy, and learning for the sake of learning. Indeed, I wonder how serious we are in stating such expectations in the first place. Independent, autonomous individuals can be annoying when young and infuriatingly deviant as adults. Are we seriously interested in developing such individuals? If we are, then it appears that profound changes in the conduct of schooling are required. One must raise questions as to whether these changes are feasible.

#### What Schools Do

Our real priorities for education in schools are best revealed in schools' allocation of time and teachers. Our data suggest four generalizations, among others.

• First, the priority given to the ability to read, write, and handle basic arithmetical operations and the subjects pre-

sumed to develop these abilities is reflected in the schools of our sample, when the data for our schools are averaged. They devoted, according to the teachers surveyed, approximately 54 percent of the weekly instructional time to reading, language arts, and mathematics at the elementary level. On the average, the junior highs allocated a total of 39 percent of the courses and teachers to English and mathematics; the senior highs an average total of 31 percent. There was a relatively high relationship between parents' satisfaction with their school (as revealed by the grade they gave it) and their satisfaction with the curricula in these two subject areas. And the students of our sample ranked both subjects high in importance.

• Second, the rather high importance given to vocational goals in the state documents appears to be paralleled by considerable attention to vocational education at the junior high level and much more attention in the senior high programs. In senior high, this emphasis appears to be somewhat at the expense of academic subjects and the intellectual emphasis desired by many parents of teenage students.

• Third, the fluctuation in attention to subjects such as science and social studies, as compared with considerable constancy in language arts and mathematics, particularly at the elementary level, suggests that the schools do not perceive themselves as having an unequivocal mandate regarding science and social studies. The arts and especially foreign languages rank somewhat farther down in the list of curricular priorities. Indeed, if the teaching of foreign languages is to be taken as a major indicator of our interest in other cultures, then it becomes clear that this interest is low. If our sample of schools is at all representative, then those persons who believe foreign languages occupy only a small place in secondary school curriculum are correct.

• Fourth, the allocation of time and teachers to the subject fields varies so much from one school to another in our sample that it becomes exceedingly difficult to generalize about the curricular opportunities available to students in our schools. Time available limits the attention given to subjects such as social studies, science, and the arts, especially in elementary schools. Teachers avail-

## “Missing at the secondary level was an emphasis on listening skills.”

able limit the courses offered in secondary schools. One wonders about teachers in some academic subjects being spread thinly over the three years in some of our senior high schools while, simultaneously, these schools were sufficiently staffed in vocational education to offer a rich array of courses.

The next important determinant of the education schools provide is the activities in the various subject fields and the topics, materials, and evaluation procedures making up these activities. Space prevents me even from summarizing our analysis of topics, materials, quizzes, and the like in the eight subject fields we studied in depth. However, I think it is important to provide some taste of what we found and so I present brief summaries in three fields: English/language arts, social studies, and the arts.

### English/Language Arts

Language arts/English formed the backbone of the curriculum in the classes we studied, especially at the elementary level. The various subjects and activities falling under this rubric—reading, composition, handwriting, speaking, listening, spelling, grammar (especially studying the parts of speech), letter writing, literature, using the dictionary—occupied more time at the elementary level and more teachers at the secondary level than any other subject (when junior and senior high data are combined).

The dominant emphasis throughout was that of teaching basic language use skills and mastering mechanics: capitalization, punctuation, paragraphs, syllabication, synonyms, homonyms, antonyms, parts of speech, and so on. These were repeated in successive grades of the elementary years, were

reviewed in the junior high years, and reappeared in the low-track classes of the senior high schools. Scattered among these basics were activities suggesting more self-expression and creative thought: story writing, role playing, reading poems, book reports, storytelling, interviews, and the like. To the list of mechanics, teachers at the junior and senior high levels added biography, fiction, nonfiction, poetry, folk tales, short stories, creative writing, keeping a journal, writing original poetry, and short stories. But, at some schools, teachers reported very few of these things.

Reading instruction in the junior and senior highs appeared to be a matter of remediation involving the mechanics of word recognition, phonics, and vocabulary development. In English, there was still a substantial emphasis on the basics of grammar and composition: punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, paragraph organization, word analysis, parts of speech. The lower track classes tended to emphasize the mechanics of English usage, whereas the high-track classes were more likely to stress intellectual skills of analysis, evaluation, and judgment, especially through literature. The low-track classes were unlikely to encounter the high-status knowledge dealt with in the upper tracks and normally considered essential for college admission. These classes tended to spend less time on instruction and homework and to experience less teacher enthusiasm and clarity of presentation. There were fewer similarities between tracks within schools than across tracks from school to school.

The most commonly offered courses in English at the high school level were those combining mechanics with some literature, courses only in literature, and those in grammar and composition—in that order. These appeared to form the core of the required English. Beyond this core were electives in journalism, speech, and creative writing.

Teachers in all schools and at all grade levels apparently used a wide array of commercially prepared materials in their teaching of the language arts subjects, especially such things as ditto masters for the preparation of student worksheets. The abundance of textbooks in use in elementary grades paralleled in their titles the teachers' listings of basic skills: *New Phonics*, *Reading Skills*, *Pat-*

*terns of Language*, *Basic Spelling Workbook*, *Creative Growth With Handwriting*, *Writing Oral Language*, *Sounds of Language*, *Progress in English*, *Spelling and Writing Patterns*, and so on. Whatever the series, the topics covered are very similar.

Textbooks and workbooks appeared with great frequency at the junior and senior high levels, repeating and extending the language usage skills of the elementary grades. Junior high teachers listed some literature commonly studied in their classes. An impression coming through is that students encountered major American and European authors primarily through anthologies of short pieces rather than through entire novels demanding extensive time and effort, particularly during the time available outside of the classroom.

Notable in the materials gathered from teachers was an emphasis on expository, to the neglect of creative, fictional writing. There was an absence of references to studying the historical development of words and language meanings. Also missing at the secondary school level was an emphasis on developing listening skills—although we note from other data that students at all levels were called upon to listen a great deal of the time.

Remember the Friday morning spelling test? It's still there. Most of the elementary teachers in our sample listed it. Tests and quizzes increased in frequency of use with progression upward through the levels of schooling. Standardized tests were used at both junior and senior high levels for placing students in classes. Teacher-made tests at these levels appeared to be designed and used, not for diagnosis, but for assessing and marking students' achievement as well as for controlling students' behavior. At all levels, these tests called almost exclusively for short answers and recall of information. Worksheets, often a part of daily instruction, were used cumulatively by many teachers as a basis of marking pupil progress and achievement. These frequently were duplicated from commercial materials. The directions given for this activity often were "copy the sentence" or "circle each verb" or "combine two sentences into one" or "add correct punctuation." If teachers gave tests involving paragraphs or essays, they seldom so indicated.

## **“The tests teachers give reflect what they believe to be important and convey to students the kinds of things they are expected to learn.”**

We saw, then, in the English/language arts program a kind of repetitive reinforcement of basic skills of language usage throughout the grades: a heavy emphasis on mechanics in the topics covered by teachers, textbooks stressing these topics, and both workbooks and quizzes emphasizing short answers and the recall of specific information. Occasionally, something markedly different caught one's eye: the second grade teacher who listed drawing conclusions, recognizing inferences, and using the context in deriving meaning as topics for student learning; several teachers at one elementary school who emphasized expression and communication over the mechanics of language; a secondary teacher who related the study of world literature to current international problems. But these were the exception, not the norm.

### **Social Studies**

Just as our data suggest a firm place in the curriculum for English/language arts and mathematics, they also suggest considerable agreement on a common body of topics and skills to be taught—and these tended to be repeated, with slight increases in difficulty, through the junior high schools and, for the low tracks, into the senior high schools. But there appears to be much less certainty about either the importance of the social studies subjects or what should be taught in them. Students considered the social studies to be less important than English/language arts and mathematics; more important than foreign languages and the arts; and of about equal importance to science, physical education, and vocational education. Junior and senior high students viewed the social studies to be among the least useful subjects in relation to their present and future needs.

The curriculum at the elementary level was amorphous, particularly in the lower grades. Many first- and second-grade classes put together the themes of understanding self and others with discussion of the family and the community. There were more field trips—to community resources and facilities—than occurred later. The intent, apparently was to begin close at hand, with oneself, and to expand one's understanding of the immediate environment. By the third grade, children frequently were studying community needs such as health care and problems such as conservation of water.

Some classes experienced forays into other cultures (Eskimo or Maori) or the dependence of their community on other communities for certain foods, raw materials, and manufactured goods. The fourth grade often involved study of early colonization and exploration of America, with accompanying use of maps and globes. By the fifth and sixth grades, the themes of history, geography, and civics made their strong appearance: mostly pertaining to the growth and development of the United States, but frequently with some attention to other countries.

Asked to identify what they were endeavoring to teach, the teachers surveyed listed map skills quite consistently. Commonly, too, they listed such things as acquiring the ability to work in groups, skill in oral expression, facility in library use, understanding similarities among cultures, and an array of the more complex intellectual processes: forming hypotheses, making comparisons, understanding sequences, formulating generalizations and conclusions, and using imagination.

The varied, amorphous character of the elementary school social studies program gave way to much greater school-

to-school uniformity at the junior high level: United States history, world history, world geography, and, commonly, a course in the history of the state in which the school studied was located. There appeared to be high-level agreement on teaching United States history in the eighth grade.

Teachers noted the expectation that their students would learn map skills, the ability to take notes, proficiency in the use of dictionaries and encyclopedias, and the skills of oral and written expression. As did elementary school teachers, junior high teachers listed an array of critical thinking skills: understanding relationships, drawing inferences and conclusions, understanding cause and effect, and so on.

According to our sample, “the basics” of social studies at the senior high level are American history and government. These appeared in some form for all schools. Beyond these courses, all schools but one offered electives which included economics, sociology, law, anthropology, psychology, world history, the history of the state, world cultures, human relations, current events, and the history and/or geography of a variety of other countries. Except for American history and government, on which there was quite common agreement, the schools offered a rather wide range of courses and topics on some of these electives. The skills most commonly sought, according to the teachers, were in map reading, library use, taking tests, and writing and thinking skills.

We can assume that the tests teachers give reflect what they believe to be important and, in turn, convey to students the kinds of things they are expected to learn. Following this assumption, it appears that teachers in the primary grades of our sample tended not to view social studies as a significant subject in the evaluation of their students. (It will be recalled that classes varied widely in the amount of time devoted to social studies instruction.) Either they gave no tests or they depended on appraising students' understanding through oral questioning. Written testing began in the three upper grades of the elementary school and increased in frequency in junior and senior high schools.

Social studies, as a field of learning, appears to be particularly conducive to the development of reasoning: deriving concepts from related events, testing in

a new setting hypotheses derived from another set of circumstances, exploring causal relationships, drawing conclusions from an array of data, and so on. Teachers at all levels listed these and more as intended learnings. Their tests reflected quite different priorities. The tests we examined rarely required other than the recall and feedback of memorized information: multiple choice, true or false, matching like things, and filling in the missing words or phrases. Some essay-type questions were used in the upper elementary grades and reappeared in the secondary schools. But these were not the dominant pattern.

One obvious generalization from our data is that all of the children and youth enrolled in the schools we studied encountered the history, geography, and government of the United States. For most, the initial encounters in the upper elementary grades were renewed in both the junior and the senior high schools. A more exhaustive (and preferably longitudinal) study than ours will be required to determine the amount of repetition experienced in these several encounters. My impression is that students beyond the elementary school would perceive themselves to have been here before—a perception likely to be intensified by the familiar form of the materials, and, as we shall see, the methods of instruction.

One puzzling question is why elementary school students liked the social studies less than any other subject. Our data show they perceived it to be one of the most difficult subjects. Was this the reason? At the secondary level, social studies came a little behind English and mathematics for liking and on a par with science. The topics commonly included in the social sciences appear as though they would be of great human interest. But something strange seems to happen to them on the way to the classroom. The topics of study become removed from their intrinsically human character, reduced to the dates and places readers will recall memorizing for tests. This is precisely the implication of a study conducted at the junior high level many years ago. Students were asked to rate their interest in a list of topics selected from several subjects, including the social studies. Topics from the social studies were rated high but social studies as a subject was rated relatively low in interest among the several curricular fields.<sup>4</sup>

The comparative study of cultures does not emerge as a basic in the curricula we examined. Nor did we find much inclusion of global or international content. Over half of all the students in our sample believed that foreign countries and their ideas are dangerous to American government. The emphasis on this nation and the relative lack of understanding of the rest of the globe showed up as well in other questions we asked these students. Our findings are in line with those of another study in which it was found that the United States was the only country (among eight) where there was substantially less interest among fourteen-year-olds in discussing foreign affairs with friends and parents than in discussing national affairs.<sup>5</sup>

I conclude by noting the preponderance of classroom activity involving listening, reading textbooks, completing workbooks and worksheets, and taking quizzes. These are in contrast to a paucity of activities requiring problem-solving, the achievement of group goals, students' planning and executing a project, and the like. The abilities involved appear very similar to those developed in the language arts. Indeed, in many ways, instruction and learning in the social studies look more like instruction and learning in the language arts (without the emphasis on mechanics) than in the social sciences. It appears that we cannot assume the cultivation of goals most appropriate to the social sciences even when social studies courses appear in the curriculum.



#### The Arts

Clearly, the visual arts and music dominated the arts curriculum of the elementary schools we studied. Children

were taught the rudiments of using crayons, watercolor paints, and clay. They used these tools to draw and paint pictures of things around them and stories read; they colored—oh, how they colored!—shapes, animals, and scenes depicted in workbooks; they painted simple still lifes; and, occasionally, they created their own pictorial images.

Music included sight reading, singing a variety of songs (many of them songs that have survived successions of school-goers), and appreciation, including music from other lands. Patriotic songs were learned and repeated. Most schools offered some kind of children's performance during the year in which music was the dominant theme.

Beyond these commonly found programs in music and the visual arts, there were scattered evidences of dance, pantomime, puppetry, performing plays, acting out, embroidery, hooking rugs, and, in one school, film-making. Also, beyond the usual activities in the two customary subjects were making collages, learning about the different musical instruments and sometimes learning to play one or more, studying different careers in music, and learning about famous composers. Most classes paid heed to the advent of seasons and holidays in their sequences and emphases on activities.

Most junior highs offered the visual arts as Art 7, 8, or 9 and music as either Music or Vocal Music 7, 8, and 9. Other offerings included Crafts, Band, Chorus, Graphic Arts, Designcraft, Orchestra, Drama, Cinema, Ensemble, Girls' Chorus, Boys' Chorus, Concert Band, Cadet Band, Glee Club, Guitar, and more. The topics listed by teachers were almost invariably tied to the technical aspects of the art form: techniques of using different media in the visual arts, "proper playing habits," rhythm, melody, harmony, line, texture, pattern.

To Art I, Art II, and Art III in the senior high schools were added a wide array of arts and crafts and especially specialized music courses. Chorus and band courses were relatively common across schools, but courses in Jazz Music, Ceramics, Photography, Sculpture, and Consumer Music—all offered somewhere—were not. As for the junior highs, the topics listed stressed learning to use the media of the visual arts and learning the "performance and rehearsal disciplines" of music. Although teach-

ers stressed goals intrinsic to the arts, they also listed goals that transcend them: power to see beyond the surface of things; a positive attitude toward experimentation; pride in work; appreciation of human dignity and values. However, my impression of the arts, as of other subjects, is that these transcendent goals took secondary position—a remote secondary position—to emphasis on the use of tools and on performance. Students in music classes at the secondary level spent an inordinate amount of class time on rehearsals—for performance at the upcoming football game or some other event.

At the elementary level, the visual arts joined physical education as the only subjects not oriented to textbooks. None was used, if the teachers reporting to us were accurate and complete in their provision of information. Teachers used the arts tools, paints, and paper as their primary materials of instruction. Teachers of music used textbooks, particularly the series of Silver Burdett. We must not assume; however, that arts classes were dominated exclusively by student activity. Teachers still talked a lot, even in these classes.

Teachers in the junior and senior high visual arts classes used books extensively in planning their classes—that is, books for teachers—but did not use textbooks for students. Once again, the Silver Burdett series dominated in music classes. An array of books on the arts and textbooks for students were used in visual arts classes but not as whole-class resources. There was little overlap, apparently, in the use of these sources for teaching and learning.

At all levels, paper-and-pencil tests were used less in the arts than in other subjects, with the exception of physical education. More often, evaluation was based on participation, performance, or a finished product. Tests, conventionally perceived, were used more often in music than in the other art forms. Tests at all levels usually were teacher made. Tests and quizzes increased in frequency with increase in grade level.

Consistently at all levels, students rated the arts as most interesting and enjoyable among the subject fields and also as relatively unimportant and easy. Although they did not participate a great deal in selecting learning materials and activities, students did this more in the arts than in the academic subjects. Both



principals and teachers in our sample viewed the arts as providing students with unique opportunities for personal development, for the provision of aesthetic experiences. It appears that the arts programs of these schools, more than other programs, captured the personal interest of students.

But I have two major reservations regarding the conduct of the arts in the schools studied, reservations which, I fear, might well be extended to schools more broadly. First, I am disappointed with the degree to which arts classes appear to be dominated by the ambience of English, mathematics, and, indeed, other academic subjects. They, too, appear to be governed by characteristics which are best described as "school"—following the rules, finding the one right answer, practicing the lower cognitive processes. Admittedly, most arts classes in our sample are less well described by language conveying conformity than are most classes in the academic subjects. Nonetheless, they did not convey the picture of individual expression and artistic creativity toward which one is lead by the rhetoric of forward-looking practice in the field. A funny thing happens to the arts, too, on their way to the classroom.

Second, there was a noticeable absence of emphasis on the arts as cultural expression and artifact. The need for expression lies just back of the human need for food, water, and socialization. Yet, the impression I get of the arts programs in the schools studied is that they go little beyond coloring, polishing, and playing<sup>6</sup>—and much of this as corollary of or instrumental to something thought to be of greater importance. What does not come through in our data is much, if any, indication that the arts were being perceived as central to personal satisfaction in a world rich in art forms, processes, and products. To grow up void of the opportunity to develop some sophistication in arts appreciation is to grow up deprived.

#### Some Discrepancies: Do We Like Them?

The allocation of time and teaching resources to the elementary and secondary schools in the sample reflected those goals most commonly articulated and most likely to appear first in documents prepared by the states. Our data, whatever the source, reveal not only the curricular dominance of English/language arts and mathematics but also the consistent and repetitive attention to

basic facts and skills. Developing "the ability to read, write, and handle basic arithmetical operations" pervades instruction from the first through the ninth grades and the lower tracks of courses beyond. These are the fundamental operations on which schools have concentrated from the beginning. They appear still to be today. Back to the basics is where we always have been.

What the schools in our sample did not appear to be doing was developing all those abilities commonly listed under "intellectual development": the ability to think rationally, to use and evaluate knowledge, intellectual curiosity, and a desire for further learning. Only rarely did we find evidence to suggest instruction likely to go much beyond mere possession of information to a level of understanding the implications of that information and either applying it or exploring its possible applications. Nor did we see in subjects generally taken by most students activities likely to arouse students' curiosity or to involve them in seeking solutions to some problem not already laid bare by teacher or textbook.

That traditional image of a teacher possessing the knowledge standing at the front of the classroom imparting it to students in a listening mode accurately portrays the largest portion of what we observed. To what degree does this prevailing stereotype condition what teachers do, reinforcing the subtle and perhaps convenient ways the kinds of teaching and learning practices that most neatly fit the circumstances of the classroom? And why should we expect teachers to teach otherwise? This is the way they were taught in school and college.

It appears that this preoccupation with the lower intellectual processes pervades such subjects as social studies and science as well. An analysis of topics studied and materials used gives not an impression of students studying human adaptations and explorations but of facts to be learned. One finds little of activities likely to promote an understanding of the basic interdependence of the biological and physical resources of the environment, or of the manner in which heritages and traditions of the past are operative today and influence the directions and values of society. Yet, it is to goals such as these that such subjects supposedly are to be committed.

## **"Teachers may start out 'fighting the system' but it is much easier to settle down into conventional ways of teaching."**

There appears not to be in relation to social studies and science the kind of social pressure for the basics brought to bear for English/language arts and mathematics. Indeed, there is among many adults a disposition to deride the tendency of schools to teach relatively inert facts while largely ignoring deeper insights and higher order intellectual skills. Why, then, does the teaching of these subjects not rise to these expectations? One reasonably plausible explanation is that the norms tend to be set by the teaching of English/language arts and mathematics. These are the most dominant subjects; students regard them as of high importance and, relatively, of considerable use later in life. The teaching of them probably helps to set the norms from which most teachers hesitate to stray.

Another explanation lies in the circumstances of schooling. Effective teaching in social studies and science calls for visits to governmental bodies in session, fields and ponds, industrial laboratories, and the like. Teaching such subjects well calls for departing from textbooks and workbooks in seeking to use multiple resources: films, an array of source books, perhaps construction materials, and small conference rooms. Field trips, deviant ways of teaching, small rooms, and the like call for different schedules and arrangements not conveniently and, therefore, not usually available in schools. Publishing companies attempting to cater to the cutting edge of instructional practice usually lose money. It is more profitable to market textbooks, in spite of the competition. Teachers may start out "fighting the system" but it is much easier, ultimately, to settle down into conventional ways of teaching. And one tends to look more "normal" by doing so. The cards are stacked against deviation and innovation.

Two major deficiencies stand out in all aspects of the curricula we studied, from state and district guides to the most important learnings perceived by students. The first is a failure to differentiate and see the relationships between facts and the more important concepts facts help us to understand. The second, closely related to the first, is a general failure to view subjects and subject-matter as merely turf on which to experience the struggles and satisfactions of personal development.

Some evidence to suggest teachers' comprehensions of these important differentiations is found in their statements of what they wanted students to learn. But the mixing together of topics (magnets, for instance) and concepts (energy) in single lists reveals that the use of the former to develop understanding of the latter was not at all clear in the minds of these teachers. There was scarcely any evidence of some awareness of this distinction being operationalized in the classroom. The emphasis on facts and the recall of facts in quizzes demonstrate not just the difficulty of teaching and testing for more fundamental understanding but the probability, supported by our data, that most teachers simply do not know how to teach for higher levels of thinking (such as applying and evaluating scientific principles). This should not surprise us. Their own teachers, for the most part, probably did not know how to do this either.

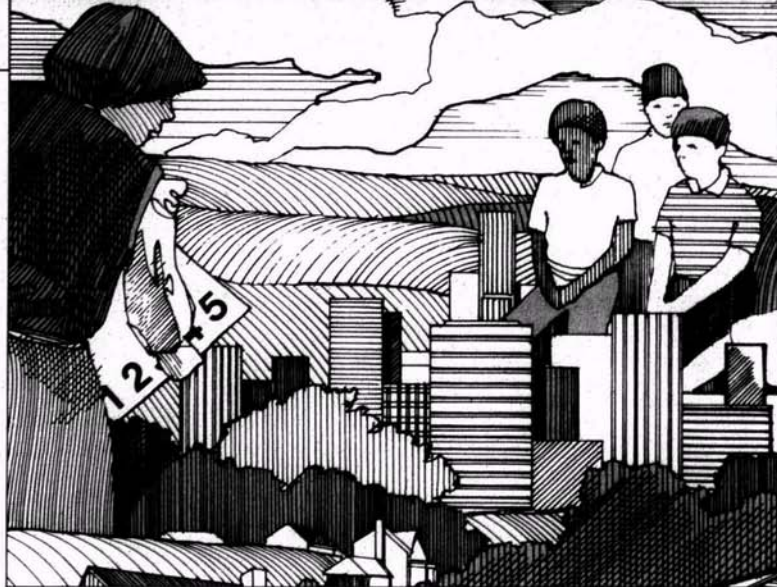
Regarding the second point, primary teachers frequently appeared to teach, at least part of the time, with some awareness that the topics they introduced were merely instrumental to personal development. But the subject as both end and means clearly dominated in grades above the fourth. We know from other inquiries that school staffs tend not to engage in dialogue about larger goals than those pertaining to acquiring the

knowledge and skills embedded in school subjects. Consequently, not often in schools is everything that goes on there viewed and treated as though contributing to traits of mind and character. Rather, one teaches or "takes" algebra and the goal of learning algebra is reinforced by tests and marks in algebra.

There is a place on the report card for marking citizenship, too, but this is something one possesses, presumably, at least to some degree. It is not something to which the activities of school are deliberately directed. Teachers are oriented to teaching particular things—the particular things they were taught in school. Relating these particular things to some larger purpose is not something they think about very much or have been prepared to do. And the professional literature on such matters available to teachers is long on philosophy and short on pedagogical operations. Conversely, the literature on the teaching of school subjects is long on operations and devoid of theoretical justification. Once again, teachers are reinforced in teaching the facts and skills of the school subjects as though these are primarily what school-based education is all about. And, in practice, it is.

The arts, physical education, and vocational education appeared to be slightly less characterized by these two curricular deficiencies. Nonetheless, it is fair to conclude, I think, that the school programs in our sample were oriented far more to the topics and skills of the courses than to the role of organized knowledge and processes of disciplined inquiry in the development of human beings. This is true even though most teachers stated that the needs and interests of students were major determinants of what they taught. Many of the curriculum reform movements of the 1960s, particularly in mathematics and the natural sciences, attempted to change this orientation but the new approaches were not readily accepted by either parents or teachers.

Although instruction in the arts, physical education, and vocational education emphasized "doing" and performance, there still was a surprising amount of student listening. It is difficult to justify the amount of teacher lecturing in many of the arts classes we observed. Only occasionally is there a



need for a teacher to lecture to a class in painting. Essential points are better made, even if frequently repeated to individuals, in the context of a student's ongoing performance. And far too much of the performance we observed was teacher—rather than student—determined. The arts are expected to provide opportunities for creative problem solving and disciplined performance. One fears that teachers in the arts behave all too frequently like teachers in academic subjects because of the prevailing view—among other teachers, not just lay citizens—that the arts are soft and on the edges of importance. Arts teachers should boldly demonstrate the potentiality for doing through the arts what cannot be done readily through the other fields.

Vocational and career goals for schools appear in the documents of all states. They emphasize the development of career awareness and the attitudes and habits of participating effectively in economic life. Where these goals address the importance of salable skills, they do so in the context of economic independence. Although these intentions made their appearance in the evidences of curricula we examined, they did not dominate. Indeed, they were quite secondary to purposes of training.

Vocational education classes in the secondary schools of our sample were oriented, it appeared, more to specific training than to general education. The attributes of general education initially associated with what once were called "the manual arts" appear not to be stressed in the conduct of most vocational education courses. And the aca-

ademic subjects appear not to be taking advantage of "hands-on" activities characteristic of vocational education classes as vehicles for intellectual development. Vocational courses commonly neglected those traits of mind and character we tend to associate with vocational and economic competence in favor of more immediately applicable job-oriented skills of limited transfer value. And we found little or nothing in our data to suggest that all students, including the college-bound, would have experience with activities designed to develop either "household skills" or some association likely to provide lifetime enjoyment.

Initially, instruction in the manual arts was introduced into the curriculum largely to provide for the simultaneous development of hand and head. The medium for the activity—paper, wood, metal, or soil—called for skill in the use of hands while presenting a problem for the mind. The purpose was not to prepare carpenter, tinsmith, or gardener, although one might become some of all three, but to provide alternative avenues<sup>2</sup> for intellectual development and the honing of some useful skills. Before the recent expansion of vocational education, most secondary schools offered manual arts classes for boys and household arts classes for girls. Some still do, with greater mixing of the sexes. And, not long ago, one could find a few elementary school classes, usually in the social studies, where children hammered and sawed, constructing, for example, replicas of the pioneer villages described in their textbooks.

My visits to classrooms and the data gathered in "A Study of Schooling" suggest that the intellectual roots feed-

ing such practices have withered. Some lower elementary teachers did use projects involving construction, building, and the like but these appeared to be supplementary, calling for the use of basic skills, and not in the spirit of a fresh intellectual challenge involving manual activity.

Almost all of the secondary school principals, counselors, and vocational education teachers with whom I attempted to discuss the issues of hand-oriented problem solving as part of general education for all students were politely puzzled by my comments and queries. Except for a very few, they were unable to provide me with data either about the percentage of students involved in non-job-oriented vocational education or about teachers using activities involving manual skills to promote intellectual development. They were far more comfortable discussing the successful job placement of students majoring in vocational subjects. Secondary teachers of academic subjects, meanwhile, shunned hands-on activities, relying almost exclusively on lectures and written assignments.

We eat, play, work, and react with others as total persons—everywhere except in the classroom, it appears. Here, we pretend, the mind floats suspended from the rest of the human system, at least temporarily. But the pretense serves poorly the aims of education and comes close to revealing what is most wrong with our schools.

The goals set for schools are particularly idealistic in the social, civic, cultural, and personal domains. It is here that we find the most altruistic expectations for understanding differing value systems; developing productive and satisfying relations with others based on respect, trust, cooperation, and caring; developing a concern for humanity; developing the ability to apply the basic principles and concepts of the sciences, fine arts, and humanities to the appreciation of aesthetic matters; and developing an understanding of the necessity for moral integrity. And, it is here that we find statements about developing the ability to use leisure time effectively, to perceive self positively, to deal with new problems in original ways, and to enjoy and be willing to experience a range of imaginative alternatives.

I conclude that the schools in our sample were contributing minimally to the attainment of such goals. With respect to some, they were rather neutral. With respect to others, they contributed negatively. And, as is the case with other goals, they contributed differentially to individual students and groups of students.

Only a few of the schools were architecturally pleasing—and then usually more by contrast with the ugliness of others than by virtue of their own merits. One set of three—elementary, middle, senior high—on a flat site was so drab, dirty, and unadorned with landscaping or color that I could only wonder about the impact on students having to spend 12 consecutive years of their lives there. Even the teachers sitting in their unattractive lounge appeared drab as though chosen for their compatibility with the site. The superintendent spoke of importing the design from California but failed to mention why grass and trees in the courtyards had been allowed to die. In another part of the country, the triple occupied three sites, each close to the others. One came to the brick and wood buildings through a grove of trees. Did this aesthetic setting, the handsome buildings, and the terraced, landscaped, spacious grounds have any impact on those in attendance? They appeared higher spirited but perhaps my own sense of pleasure distorted my perceptions.

Learning in school begins and continues primarily as individual activity in a group setting. The total class group is largely a circumstance necessitated economically, not a vehicle for teaching the requirements of cooperative endeavor. Students rarely set group goals, the attainment of which depends on a division of labor and the successful orchestration of the pieces. There is very little in our data to suggest the possibility of "developing productive and satisfying relations with others based on respect, trust, cooperation and caring." There is little to convey the legitimacy of students helping each other with their individual assignments. Rather, to seek help is to run the risk of "cheating." And to give help is to give away some of whatever competitive edge one enjoys. The most charitable view one could have of this is that schools do not deliberately seek to promote antisocial behavior. On the other hand, they appear to do little

to promote the prosocial behavior many of our goals for schools espouse.

In the personal domain, our goals speak to the school's role in preparing for the wise and creative use of leisure time. The schools I attended provided for my participation in soccer, basketball, football, and volleyball. These required minimal provision of equipment—a ball, a bat, a net. Neither schools nor households could afford the costs of the skis, racquets, and other equipment required for individual sports. Once having left school, I lost the groups of five, nine, or eleven required for the pursuit of these recreational activities. I was not prepared in the skills required for participation in golf, tennis, skiing, badminton, and the like. Our data suggest that schools have not changed much in their neglect of the physical skills and abilities relevant to the sports most played by adults.

Presumably, children and youth learn something of teamwork in the group sports dominating physical education classes and the extracurricular side of school. But, as in the academic domain, the ambience is one of competition. In the analysis of the physical education programs, we noted that activities were pervaded by competition. My argument is not against competition. It is against the near absence of anything designed to deliberately cultivate the values and skills of constructive social interaction and group accomplishment which we extol as a characteristic of our people but neglect in the breach.

The gap between the rhetoric of individual flexibility, originality, and creativity in our statements of educational goals and the cultivation of these in our schools reveals a monstrous hypocrisy. From the beginning, students experience school and classroom environments that condition them in precisely opposite behaviors—seeking "right" answers, conforming, and reproducing the known. These behaviors are reinforced daily by the physical restraints of the group and classroom, by the kinds of questions teachers ask, by the nature of the seatwork exercises assigned, and by the format of tests and quizzes. They are further reinforced by the nature of the rewards—particularly the subtleties of implicitly accepting "right" answers and behaviors while ignoring or otherwise rejecting "wrong" or deviant answers.

Only in the "less important" subjects and the advanced sections of academic courses are there evidences of some significant cultivation and reinforcement of more creative or intellectually independent behaviors.

It is difficult to be sanguine about the moral and ethical learnings accompanying many of the experiences of schooling. My perception is that the emphasis on individual performance and achievement would be more conducive to cheating than to the development of moral integrity. I have difficulty seeing how much of what goes on in classrooms would contribute to understanding and appreciating the contributions of others. I see little in the curriculum, explicit or implicit, likely to promote keen awareness of humanity. Given this curriculum, the findings from other studies regarding relatively limited understanding of other cultures and some suspicion toward them among our young people do not surprise me. Particularly lacking in our data is anything to suggest the deliberate involvement of students in making moral judgments and in understanding the difference between these and decisions based on scientific facts.

One need not speculate abstractly on the cultivation of goals of self-realization in schools. In general, students doing well feel good about themselves; those performing poorly do not. I wonder about the values in feelings of success derived primarily from personal performance compared with the performance of others. There are not in our data findings to imply stress on seeking to outdo one's own previous performance. And I wonder, conversely, about failure that leads individuals to feel that they are not good at all. What are

schools doing to "develop the ability to assess realistically and live with one's limitations and strengths?" A small percentage of students receive a large percentage of the failing grades, year after year. It is difficult to perceive this as useful failure. Schools would be markedly different if their ongoing function was to ensure successful performance and not failure. We would not put up for long with a physician who sent our child home with an F for health but no assistance in becoming healthy.

Finally, I wonder about the impact of the flat, neutral emotional ambience of most of the classes we studied. Many observers of modern life have noted our preoccupation with coping. Boredom is a disease of epidemic proportions. Many of the escapes from boredom leave people unsatisfied, unfulfilled, and fretful. For millions, television is a sedative; for others, drugs and alcohol provide a temporary escape. The secondary students in our sample chose drugs and alcohol, above all others, as their school's worst problem.

Why are our schools not places of joy? What better places to cultivate the free self? In Stephen Bailey's words:

Surely, the educational system has no higher function than to help people to have creative engagements with the world of the free self. For if the world of the free self is appropriately cultivated, its felicitous admixture of playfulness, concentration, and socializing can affect, infect, and help to liberate the worlds of work and coping. The free self then becomes not a mere segment of existence but a quality of existence.

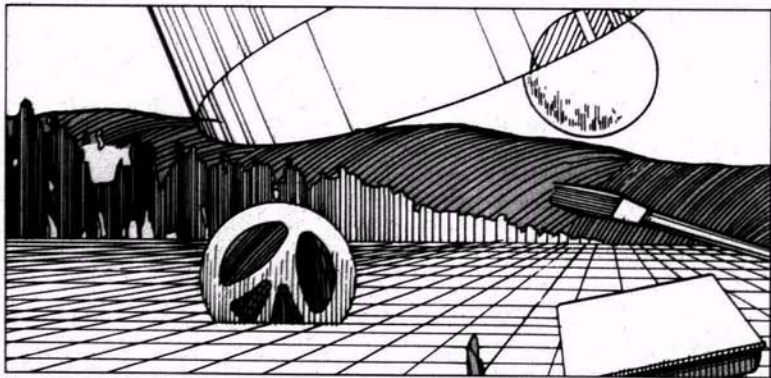
Bailey's words remind us once again of this strangely unique characteristic of classroom life—the not quite successful but extraordinarily persistent pretense that human existence can be segment-

ed, that part of it be left outside the classroom door. The whole comes together again in the hallways, on the playground, and off the school site. But to bring the whole person into the classroom and to attempt to deal with him or her there, in large numbers, is to threaten the very existence of this partial ecosystem, which is neither abrasive nor unduly uncomfortable. Deviant behavior, such as excessive fear and unbridled laughter, might destroy the balance.

One can see how the circumstances of schooling inhibit movement, small group work, and even overt expressions of joy, anger, and other feelings. It is far more difficult, however, to understand the relative paucity of vicarious experiences designed to connect students in some more passionate and compassionate way with the wholeness of human existence and especially with such existential qualities as hope, courage, and love for mankind. These qualities are portrayed particularly through the humanities and especially through literature—myths and fairy tales, novels, drama, and poetry.

The early years of schooling appear to me to be shockingly devoid of fairy tales with their extraordinary ability to symbolize through dragons, heroes, and caring for another the challenges, problems, and opportunities life presents. There are dragons yet to slay—poverty, disease, senseless violence, and prejudice, to name only a few. The tragedies and the triumphs of human striving are portrayed in all the forms of literature. There is no assurance from our data, however, that students were delving into them, especially if enrolled in the lower tracks of the English courses. For the most part, they were repetitively preoccupied with the mechanics of usage. Reading beyond textbooks and workbooks did not appear to be a dominant activity. Indeed, it appeared, rather, that many students could graduate from 12 years of schooling with only a superficial, minimal exposure to significant literary works.

A quite natural and understandable reaction to all of this is to blame those "incompetent, uncaring teachers." But such a response is both simplistic and, largely, unjust. For years, schools and teachers have been criticized for their neglect of the fundamentals. But if our sample is at all representative, it appears that teachers are very preoccupied with



trying to teach children and youth precisely what we blame them for not teaching. Then, when we put what they are doing under a microscope and compare it to our most idealistic statements regarding what schools are for, we don't like what we see.

Which way do we want it? Do we want schools and teachers to respond to the messages they most probably hear, the messages telling them to work particularly on children's ability to read, write, and handle arithmetical operations? If so, we should not anticipate much change in what schools do now. English/language arts and mathematics will continue to dominate the curriculum. The other subjects, with the exception of vocational education in the high schools, will continue to have an uncertain, uneven place in the curriculum. The methods of lecturing, questioning, monitoring seatwork, and testing, together with the present materials of instruction, will continue to prevail. About 15 percent of those in attendance will do very well, another 15 to 25 percent will do reasonably well, and minority students will slowly increase their membership in these groups. From 15 to 25 percent will not complete high school and minority students will continue to be over-represented in this group. Standardized achievement test scores probably will rise enough to be acceptable and, since a larger percentage of students coming into the major universities will write and spell somewhat better, the pressure to improve schools will diminish somewhat, at least for a few years.

But, the quality of educating in schools will not have improved. Indeed, quite conceivably it could be worse: more boring, less fun, more repetitious, still fewer encounters with significant intellectual problems, even more siphoning of non-academic students into vocational training, and fewer experiences with the arts. Nonetheless, the nation's teachers will have responded to what they think they hear. This is what they have heard all along, except in occasional periods of serious effort at reform such as in the decade beginning about 1957 and ending about 1967—and the messages heard then confused teachers. What teachers now hear and have heard may be, for many, what they prefer to hear. It is the message for which they are best prepared to respond.

**“Either we must settle for schools just a little better than what we now have or put our money where our mouths are.”**

Or, do we seriously believe in and want for our schools at least some of what is implied in all those goals statements coming after the one about reading, writing, and figuring? If so, the Phoenix rising before us is, indeed, an unfamiliar bird—and perhaps an unlikely one, too. Because now we are confronted with the need to involve students in a variety of ways of thinking, to introduce students to concepts and not just facts, to provide situations that provoke and evoke curiosity, to develop personal standards of work and ensure the satisfaction of meeting them, to develop appreciation of others through cooperative endeavors, to be concerned about the traits of mind and character fostered in schools, and on and on. No longer is it sufficient to teach some facts of geography, a little algebra, or the mechanics of language. The school subjects become means for learnings that transcend them.

Do the preceding sentences provide a glimpse of what we want? I am not at all sure that they do. The educational activities implied reflect what states proclaim the school to be for and what most of the parents in our sample appeared to want. But we have not fully considered the implications of the grand phrases. How many creative thinkers do businesses need? What kind of nation is one awash with autonomous individuals? How many painters and museums can we afford? We are a nation predominantly oriented to the instrumental values of education. If more schooling does not ensure a better job, what good is it?

Still, we keep on repeating our idealistic expectations for schools. We must

have some belief in the relevance and worth. Either we must come to terms with unrealistic expectations and settle for schools just a little better than what we now have or put our money where our mouths are. So far, we have designed and supported schools capable of doing only the simplest parts of the whole.

Realism tells us that the road to significant change is long and cluttered. We have failed, rather consistently, to recognize the nature and magnitude of the tasks involved. Part of our failure is in not recognizing that schools alone cannot teach what our young people require in a world most of us scarcely comprehend.

Part of our failure stems from a great irony. Those who still live in the past confidently set the norms for educating those who will live in the future. The time has come for us to look more carefully into what we have wrought and the alternatives we might seriously endeavor to create. Each of us has that opportunity. □

<sup>1</sup>John I. Goodlad, Kenneth A. Sirotnik, and Bette C. Overman. "An Overview of 'A Study of Schooling,'" *Phi Delta Kappan* 61, 3 (November 1979): 174-178.

<sup>2</sup>John I. Goodlad, M. Frances Klein, and Kenneth A. Tye. "The Domains of Curriculum and Their Study," in *Curriculum Inquiry: The Study of Curriculum Practice*, John I. Goodlad and associates (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), pp. 43-76.

<sup>3</sup>Kenneth A. Sirotnik. *What You See Is What You Get: A Summary of Observations in Over 1000 Elementary and Secondary Classrooms. A Study of Schooling Technical Report No. 29* (Los Angeles: Laboratory in School and Community Education, Graduate School of Education, University of California, 1981).

<sup>4</sup>Arthur Jersild, and Ruth J. Tasch. *Children's Interests and What They Suggest for Education* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949).

<sup>5</sup>Judith V. Torney. "Psychological and Institutional Obstacles to the Global Perspective in Education," in *Schooling for a Global Age*, ed. James M. Becker, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), p. 84.

<sup>6</sup>Dennie Wolf, and Howard Gardner. "Beyond Playing or Polishing," in *Arts and the Schools*, ed. Jerome J. Hausman (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), pp. 47-77.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen K. Bailey. *The Purposes of Education* (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa, 1976), p. 61.

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