

Letters

A Criticism and a Commendation

Congratulations on your excellent issue, "Schools, Parents, and Values" (May 1988). I was pleased to see "Moral Education in the Life of the School" by the ASCD panel.

Efforts to develop a consensus on moral values in a pluralistic society are often criticized on the grounds that the list either includes moral characteristics deemed undesirable by some groups or omits characteristics deemed desirable by others. I find the ASCD panel's list ("The Morally Mature Person," p. 5) troublesome on different grounds. Many of the characteristics, while noteworthy, are too vague or ambiguous to provide practical guidance. Further clarification is needed to render them more meaningful.

For example, the panel maintains that a morally mature person cares about the welfare of others, "which includes caring for one's country." Would this have applied to a German living during the Nazi era? There are situations where moral individuals are forced to choose between their country and their conscience.

Furthermore, the panel asserts that a morally mature person seeks peaceful resolution of conflict, "which includes working for peace." Many hold that the best way to promote world peace is to arm ourselves. Others hold that the best way is to disarm. Who is right? More important, how do we decide who is right?

Attempts to compile lists concerning any aspect of morality are never without their critics. Nevertheless, I commend the ASCD panel for its work. Only through such efforts will our society increase its awareness of the moral dimensions of life and learn to value morality.

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Department of Philosophy
University of San Francisco
San Francisco, California

The ASCD Panel Replies

On behalf of the ASCD Panel on Moral Education I commend Phyllis Berger

for her interest. In the space allowed it was, of course, impossible to convey adequately the characteristics of a morally mature person. Volumes have been written about each of the characteristics mentioned. We appreciate her criticism and support.

KEVIN RYAN
Chair, ASCD Panel on Moral
Education
Professor of Education
Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

"Alternative" Means Different, Not Less Rigorous

I read with great interest and some concern Linda Darling-Hammond's article ("The Futures of Teaching" and the subsequent interview) in the November issue. While I fully support efforts to professionalize teaching, I would encourage Darling-Hammond to reconsider her negative appraisal of alternative methods of certification.

Self-education has traditionally been an American value. While it's true that "there aren't many Abe Lincolns studying in front of the fireplace any more to become lawyers," those who are should not be penalized because they have gained their knowledge and expertise through alternative methods. If a goal of education is to help children become self-directed learners, let's take care not to exclude the self-directed adult from the profession of teaching.

I understand the need for a profession to set standards and high ones at that. Alternative paths to certification intended to undermine those standards should definitely be questioned. However, alternative methods need not be less rigorous. Please look to those states as models who still recognize those who read for the law as well as those who attend an accredited institution. Education should celebrate diversity by setting standards that em-

brace differences and encourage more than one right way to become a professional educator. Let's not force all teachers into one mold.

NORMA WILLINGHAM
Principal
Neighborhood Schoolhouse
Brattleboro, Vermont

Basal Readers Have Changed

Having just completed the examination and evaluation phase of Virginia's basal reading textbook adoption, I must disagree with William Bintz ("Letters," November 1988) when he says that basal readers have not changed.

Basal readers are a long way from perfection with regard to promoting personal reading choice, and many skill-driven scope-and-sequence charts still exist. But every submitting publisher had at least tried to incorporate active learning and individual reading strategies. Those series that we recommended represented a great improvement over the past 10 years. Based upon what Virginia, California, and other states have said, I expect the publishers to continue to try to improve in these and other areas.

Bintz does both publishers and education a disservice by implying that no significant change has occurred. It hasn't yet gone far enough or spread widely enough, but it exists. We should build on it, not simply deny it.

J. KENNETH BRADFORD
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English Language Arts/Reading
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Let's Focus on Learning

The November issue ("The Future of the Teaching Profession") is provocative, stimulating, and revealing. I was particularly pleased to read the article by Gene Geisert ("Participatory Management: Panacea or Hoax?"). Geisert

What Do You Think?

We welcome your comments on articles in *Educational Leadership*. Please send letters to: Executive Editor, ASCD, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314-1403. Letters selected for publication may be edited for brevity and clarity.

raised significant questions which deserve serious consideration. He is obviously concerned by what he sees as a trend. I share his concern, perhaps for different reasons.

My concern is that the focus on teaching and governance leads us away from the substance of a much more critical issue, which is learning. The reason for teaching, or schooling, is learning. It is exquisitely logical that the reason for teaching is to have someone learn.

If the act of teaching is the most significant part of the process to produce learning, then it is the relation of that act to the production of learning which provides the substance of teacher education and the future of the teaching profession.

If the organization of a school, the governance of a school (who can tell others what to do and how to do it), is another significant part of the process to produce learning, then it is necessary to evaluate any existing or proposed way of organizing a school in terms of its success in producing learning.

The basic reason for doing anything in a school is to produce learning.

GEORGE P. YOUNG
Superintendent

Jordan Public Schools
Independent School District 717
Jordan, Minnesota

Address Correction for Children's Art Exchange

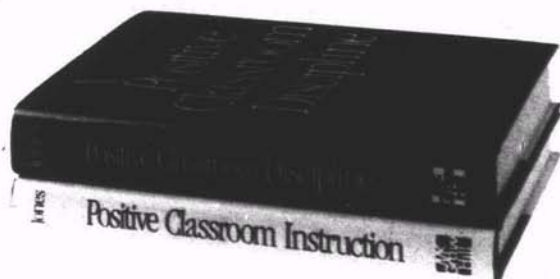
The Children's Art Exchange was listed in "Resources for Teaching About U.S.—U.S.S.R. Relations," (December 1988/January 1989). We have been pleased to hear from a number of people who are interested in our educational and cultural exchange project—in spite of the inaccurate address given in the article! The correct address is:

Children's Art Exchange
P.O. Box 503
Middlebury, VT 05753
(802) 388-3023

ANN M. ROSS
Administrative Director
Children's Art Exchange
Middlebury, Vermont



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Foreword by Madeline Hunter

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