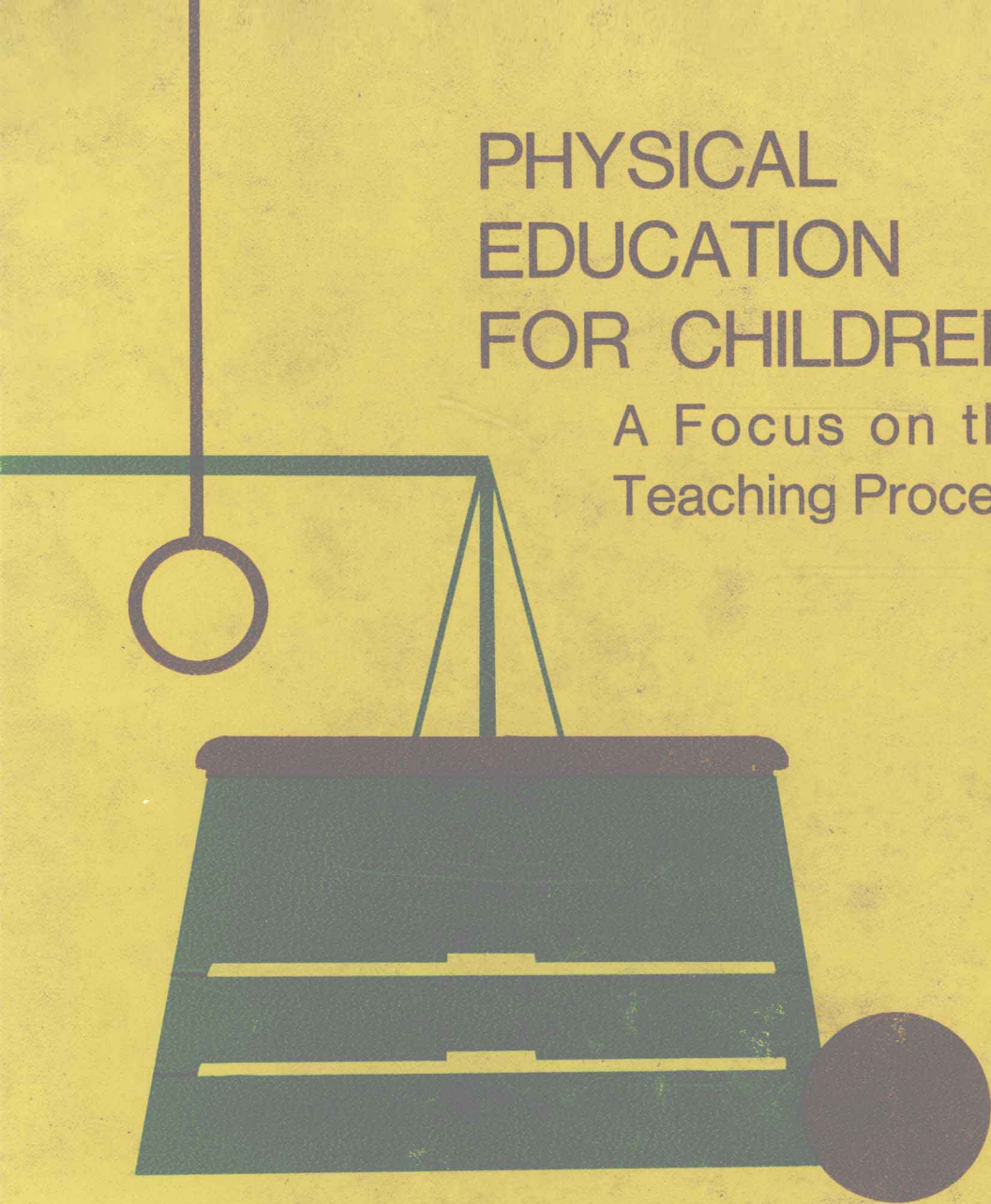


# PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN:

A Focus on the  
Teaching Process



BETTE J. LOGSDON

KATE R. BARRETT

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MARY ANN ROBERTON

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BETTE J. LOGSDON

*Professor, Bowling Green State University,  
Bowling Green, Ohio*

KATE R. BARRETT

*Professor, The University of North Carolina  
at Greensboro*

MARGARET AMMONS

*Professor, Agnes Scott College,  
Decatur, Georgia*

MARION R. BROER

*Professor Emeritus, University of Washington,  
Seattle*

LOLAS E. HALVERSON

*Professor, University of Wisconsin—  
Madison*

ROSEMARY McGEE

*Professor, The University of North Carolina  
at Greensboro*

MARY ANN ROBERTON

*Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin—  
Madison*

Lea & Febiger



*Philadelphia*

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# PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN:

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## Preface

Perhaps history has written this book and not the authors. This book could not have been written 30, 20, 2 years ago when the theories and ideas basic to the book were germinating and being tested. As written, it is still only a chapter in the historical development of an emerging curriculum in elementary school physical education. Hopefully the ideas will stimulate our readers and others to expand, elaborate, and refine them. If so, each of you may experience a new professional era of enlightenment, excitement, and commitment. If this period comes, the ideas that are basic to the development of this book will be studied, understood, practiced, challenged, and—if history is to go forward—changed.

I am grateful to both the education and physical education colleagues who have joined me to make this professional vision a reality. The original writing of each of these authors has been respected, and their contributions are indicative of a significant point in time. At present the profession is becoming more unified concerning the mission of movement in the education of children. When the physical education profession can demonstrate such a consolidated and harmonious purpose, it will be able to make full use of its rich potential.

These tenets of the emerging curriculum, as it is perceived in this book, are fundamental, and stem from a belief that physical education is a responsible and vital program of every school curriculum:

1. Physical education is included in the elementary school curriculum because it is important to the developing child as well as to his adult life.

2. The content of physical education is human movement.

3. Each child develops, learns, and responds in unique ways.

4. Sharing the decision-making role with the child can be a means of involving the total child in his education and a means of developing independency and individuality in learning.

5. Evaluation is an ongoing process that must focus on the learner, the teacher, and the curriculum if each is to improve.

Essential to implementing these ideas fully is an urgency to seek a more complete understanding of the child, human movement, and the teaching-learning process. The ideas central to the book reveal a close interrelatedness between the response of the child and the response of the teacher and between the content of physical education and the total teaching process. To be interested in one and not the other would fall short of what is envisioned in this book as the emerging curriculum in elementary school physical education.

Each of the authors joins me in acknowledging the many people in the United States, England, and Canada who contributed in diverse and meaningful ways to the ideas that have taken shape in the book. Our students, the children each of us has taught, and especially our colleagues have played major roles. A special expression of gratitude is extended to the children, faculty, and administrators of Conneaut Elementary School, Crim Elementary School, and Saint Aloysius School as well as the administrative officers of these Bowling Green, Ohio, schools and the Julius I. Foust Elementary School, David D. Jones School,

Lindley Elementary School, and Wiley Primary School of Greensboro, North Carolina. The personnel of these schools have encouraged our colleagues, our students, and us in developing this educational approach to physical education by providing us with continual opportunity to be a part of their schools.

*Bowling Green, Ohio*

Finally, I want to express my indebtedness to the Department of Physical Education and Recreation and to the College of Education for their encouragement, stimulation, and support while my colleagues and I search for a more effective teacher preparation program at Bowling Green State University.

BETTE J. LOGSDON

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# Chapter 1

## Elementary Education— a Perspective

Margaret Ammons

To discuss elementary education in the United States is, in some measure, to discuss the history of the country. As this book is being prepared, citizens across the land are marking this nation's 200th anniversary. If I had to select one word to describe what has happened since colonial times, it would be *change*. From this change has come some progress. One reasonable assumption is that elementary education reflects the changes and the progress in this country. Is this assumption valid? The present chapter explores this question and others that relate to prospects for the future of elementary education in the United States.

First, I have taken a brief look at elementary education "then" in theory and practice. Second, I have looked at elementary education "now" in theory and practice. Third, I have set forth a philosophy of elementary education and its factors in terms of elementary programs today. Finally, I have cautioned those responsible for the planning and implementing of programs in elementary schools.

### ELEMENTARY EDUCATION THEN

One way to examine elementary education is to explore what it is or has been in theory and then to compare the theory with current or past practices. Perhaps the prime factor in determining whether education reflects the changes and progress of the United States is the relation of stated purpose to actual practice. Throughout the history of education in this country, the literature has contained statements of purpose for education in a democracy. Even when such statements are not explicit, they are implied in

every proposal for change in education. However, we must compare those stated purposes with reports of actual classroom practice.

Public education emerged in the colony of Massachusetts in the middle of the 17th century. Since the founding of that colony was based on religious beliefs, its schools were also created for a religious purpose. An important part of the beliefs held by the people who came to Massachusetts centered on the idea of personal salvation. To achieve salvation, one had to read the Bible. As towns grew, it became practical to teach children in ever increasing numbers. Where dame schools had sufficed in earlier times, it was deemed necessary to move to a more formal situation in the 1640s. A purpose of such significance was too vital to be left to the good nature of a townswoman or, worse, to mere chance. Since the schools had a clear purpose, practices to fulfill this purpose were clear. Lessons were assigned, studied, and recited. If students did not master the task in the first attempt, they needed further study and additional recitation. In these schools, perhaps to a greater degree than has existed since, purpose and practice were closely related.

Schools cropped up in other colonies. In New York City, for example, a variety of religious groups established schools for the poor. In most if not all, the focus was much the same as in Massachusetts. If their purpose had a one-word title, it would be "literacy." There are many reasons for a society to become literate. For the early members of the various towns and colonies, the reason to be literate was intimately entwined with the good of one's soul.

It was simply moral to learn the rudiments of the written language. In the minds of many teachers now, those were the "good old days." There were virtually no distractions, no frills, and few attempts to provide for individual differences among students. The only nod in the direction of individualized instruction was that a student could take as long as necessary to complete a given job. The notion of failure and promotion had to wait for a different social climate.

By the mid-19th century, conditions in the United States were quite different. To telescope, two major thrusts were apparent: the Industrial Revolution and the enormous numbers of individuals who were immigrating to the eastern seaboard. This situation, taken with the popular slogan, "The Age of the Common Man," created a climate that resulted in a new stated purpose for the schools. This new purpose was to provide, for all who chose to accept it, the opportunity to better themselves, i.e., to equip themselves to partake of the good life offered by the robust and growing country. Basic to the success of this ideal was the entailed educational purpose, literacy. During this period literacy was not seen wholly or even significantly as the saving of men's souls. Rather, it was the passport to the good life. With a new reason for literacy, would new practices follow?

In 1848, in Boston, a new kind of school opened.<sup>1</sup> The Quincy grammar school was the first American school organized on the basis of grades—apparently to accommodate increasing numbers of students. The modest claim made for the Quincy school was that it would set the pattern of elementary schools for 20 years. What was different about this school? First, children were assigned to groups according to age. A child entered school at about age 6, remained in one group for the entire school year, and if successful in completing the tasks assigned to him, was promoted to the next grade. If unsuccessful, he repeated the grade. This first major difference gave rise to a new idea in public schooling: built-in failure was respectable. Second, and of necessity, came two other phenomena. A graded structure required materials that were compatible with the new organization, so graded textbooks appeared in massive quantities. These texts defined the

amount of material that a student must master in a school year. These limits were arbitrarily set since there was little information on which to establish norms for children of a particular age.

The other concomitant of a graded structure was the graded teacher. Preparation for this profession meant learning what was to be covered in a given school year by a certain age child and dispensing that material. Despite these significant changes in the elementary school, the relation between purpose and program was still high. Methods and materials were designed to move students toward literacy.

While education has rarely been without its critics, in the late 19th century a well-defined movement began to emerge. In 1892 members of the National Education Association (NEA) whose interest was children of kindergarten age broke with the NEA to form the International Kindergarten Union (IKU). Their grievance against the NEA centered on its failure to support programs that members of the IKU believed to be appropriate for young children. These educators sought to break the lock-step, rigid program that had evolved in the elementary school.

The second substantial critic was John Dewey. In his writings and in the school he established at the University of Chicago, he devised a new way to educate young children. His system centered on the belief that the human organism was not a pitcher to be filled but rather a being with a sense of purpose, with interests, with curiosity. What he saw in schools was inimical to the nature of the child being educated. He wanted the educational program to further the natural inclinations of children rather than forcing them to accept predetermined material.

Dewey, then, articulated a new purpose for education in the 20th century: the opportunity for children to grow through problem-solving experiences. Since such experiences could not occur in a traditional, rigid program, his proposal required a program that would encourage students to inquire, to formulate problems real to them, and to seek data relevant to the problem at hand. He envisioned learning as the goal. Dewey attracted countless disciples, and the educational literature of the 20th century bears the unmistakable mark of

this man. Teachers flocked to his classes at Columbia University, and colleagues endeavored to translate their understanding of his purpose into practical programs. Thus, programs in the elementary schools were expected to reflect the Deweyan purpose.

For reasons not yet understood, however, the Dewey influence was limited largely to the printed page. In spite of the sincere attempts of teacher educators, administrators, and teachers themselves, and in spite of the widespread acceptance of a new purpose for elementary schools, business proceeded as usual, with two sets of purposes. One set was Dewey's, or something close to it; the other was the operational set. Operationally, the purpose was much the same as it had been. What transpired in schools differed little from what had been seen in the previous century.

While the foregoing describes education in the early part of this century, what happened in elementary education after 1950? The critics did not lessen their attacks against education in either intensity or number. However, they now charged that education was too soft, that it demonstrated anti-intellectual qualities, and that children were not being taught to read. Many laid the blame at the feet of John Dewey.

How did the targets of these charges respond? The rebuttal was expected to center on the claim that schools had abandoned their earlier role. Instead researchers rushed to demonstrate that schools were still achieving purposes current in the early part of this century. For example, studies were conducted in 1951, 1952, and 1957 which were designed to prove that children in those years "were doing as well as children in 1921, 1932, and 1937, and which used as measures those tests developed to assess student progress toward purposes in 1920–1931."<sup>2</sup> Such studies do not support the idea that programs of the 1950s reflected the purpose that had seized the imagination of so many who wrote about education. They do suggest that such programs were substantially like those of earlier decades.

Criticism did not abate, but not until October, 1957, did those seeking to make the schools more academically respectable have hard evidence to support their claims. Soviet Russia successfully launched the first Sputnik. America had been beaten in the space race and

the fault was the schools'. Where no amount of pleading had been successful, this event spurred the U. S. Congress to provide millions of tax dollars to upgrade the teaching of science, mathematics, and foreign languages. What resulted from these expenditures is a matter of public record. Teachers were re-treaded in countless workshops across the nation. Academicians heretofore uninterested in the programs of elementary schools plunged into program development. Modern math, inquiry approaches in the natural and social sciences, individualized programs, and much more were produced. Avowed purpose and the program designed to achieve it seemed to be positively correlated once again. New evidence did not support this conclusion; operationally the purpose was still literacy. In 1970, Goodlad and his associates spent hundreds of hours observing in classrooms. They found that elementary education was essentially as it had been.<sup>3</sup>

In working with teachers, I have also found that, particularly in the primary grades, reading and mathematics have achieved such importance that teachers have difficulty working science and social studies into the class schedule. Not teaching, not money, not exhortation have produced changes in practice. *In essence* the elementary school program is today as it was a century ago. Literacy, not learning, is still the operational goal. Although I am strongly tempted to speculate about or even to analyze the stubborn nature of this educational puzzle, such conjecture is not the purpose of this treatise.

### SOME OUGHTS FOR EDUCATION

I have chosen the word "ought" to express my convictions regarding some questions that seem basic to educational decision-making. If one presumes to recommend what ought to be done in any field, one must share the basis for those recommendations. If proposals are inconsistent with basic beliefs, the entire package is, at best, suspect. Therefore, prior to urging a type of education, I will share my basic assumptions about the nature of man, the nature of knowledge, and the nature of the good society and the individual's relation to it.

First, man is rational, in that he can see alternatives and choose among them. Man does

not ordinarily act capriciously. Further, man can increase his ability to act with reason. Finally, man desires to improve and is curious and enthusiastic about topics that have meaning for him.

Much of what I know did not come to me through the five senses, as usually interpreted. I can know what it is like to be lonely or happy, but the way I know is probably different from the way I know that something is blue or hard. If so, what I offer a learner must involve knowing in many ways. Knowledge, then, cannot be limited to what is measured by responses to a paper-and-pencil test, or what is read from a book. Knowledge must allow for empathic knowing. The learner will gain much of worth without my intervention. Finally, knowing and thus learning are deeply personal.

In the good society, man is free to choose, to make of himself what he will. Such a society encourages independence of mind and spirit. The individual, in turn, has an obligation to behave as a human being, with the capacity to choose, to add to his knowledge those factors that will let him achieve his potential and contribute to the good of all.

The foregoing summary reflects my stand on the questions that each must answer as he contemplates the task of teaching. If I have been consistent, I can use these assumptions as my criteria for examining projections for the 1970s. What follows is not the only program that could evolve from these basic values, but this program does offer realistic possibilities for progress. Educational aims, organization, activities, and evaluation can now be discussed.

## AIMS

Sets of aims or goals have already been discussed, for example, in the section on John Dewey. While much of what he offered to American educators is consonant with my beliefs, there is a need to go further. If change is integral and inevitable in this country in the foreseeable future, the ability to cope with change is a necessary aspect of personal development. Coping with change entails the ability to choose among the changes available or to choose not to change. The important factor is choice. Human beings will either choose, wisely or unwisely, or have thrust upon them a series of decisions. Believing as I do, the latter possibility is unacceptable.

Therefore, the most important aim of the elementary school is to enhance each student's grounds for choosing wisely. Certainly, the home and the church, along with countless other social institutions, have a responsibility in the area of improving individual choice. The school, however, has a unique role in this regard, for in the school, at least given current arrangements, a child has systematic access to the conventional wisdom of the race. Here he may garner enlightened information regarding how his ancestors have dealt with change and choice. In the school, at least in theory, he learns to weigh, to evaluate, and to compare his own bents, desires, conclusions, and speculations against those of others throughout history. In such an atmosphere, he begins to see the meaning of choice—the ability to project consequences of action—and the relation of *his* values to *his* actions.

Such an aim entails others. A child, in order to learn to choose wisely, must move toward literacy in a variety of areas. Two factors must be underscored. First, he *begins* to move toward literacy. As mentioned earlier, with the advent of the graded school, a conviction developed that each school year had about it a finality, an end. Rarely does a school year close with children's having a sense of continuity from one year to the next. The third grade is just that; it bears little relation to the year that precedes or follows it. Too often, the teacher expects that certain material has been covered and therefore learned, thus absolving him of any responsibility toward that material. Rather, an elementary education must open, not close, a child's mind. It is a disservice to lead him to believe that he has "finished" any aspect of his education.

Second, the child must begin to move toward literacy in a variety of areas. As suggested before, literacy has often come to mean the ability to read, particularly in materials designed to teach the skill of decoding new words and the skill of literal translation. Literacy should claim much wider boundaries, but evidence indicates that the foregoing emphases absorb inordinate amounts of children's time in school. Literacy, for example, means also the ability to deal accurately with ideas of quantity and relation. This ability goes far beyond the age-old assignment of numerous arithmetic examples to be worked. Such literacy requires a

deep understanding of what ideas numerals represent and how they relate to one another, as well as the ability to apply mathematical operations appropriately.

Literacy includes further the capacity to analyze the history of the race as recorded by many observers. This meaning is not to be equated with a knowledge of chronology, or with the accumulation of conclusions about historic events as depicted by observers. What is intended is a child's growth toward making critical judgments about man in all his varied developments.

Literacy exists in a child's grasp of his natural world and his relation to it. If he is to become a prudent choice-maker in the realm of the environment, for example, he must range far beyond the memorization of what specialists have proclaimed. If he is to exercise wise judgments about the conduct of national and international politics, his education must help him to become literate in those disciplines that impinge upon such judgments and choices. As a member of his society a child must become literate in those areas that affect his physical well-being. No longer can we be content with his ability to play games. Too much is at stake to let games pass as literacy.

Literacy is also involved in the arts—literary, graphic, and performing. Through such literacy comes a bond between the child and the aspirations, despairs, and frustrations of humankind. Such literacy helps a child to experience the heights and depths of human emotion at times of failure and success. It enables him to feel the enormity of the act of choosing.

Three aspects summarize literacy in terms of enhancing a human's ability to make wise choices. First, literacy is much more than the simple accumulation of information about disciplines that are commonly associated with the curriculum of the elementary school. Literacy demands that a child internalize information, weigh it, sort it, and use it in making choices about the world and his place in it. Second, literacy must no longer be an end in itself. To demonstrate literacy without the correlative ability and inclination to use it in one's life is to demonstrate pedantry. Third, literacy, as I have discussed it, is an appropriate aim for even the very young. While it may become increasingly sophisticated in later school years, it

cannot be ignored in the elementary school. Assuming that the ability to memorize and return information on demand is a necessary and sufficient condition for later literacy is, first, to perpetuate what has occurred for decades and, second, to assume that the human organism at some magical age changes from being sponge-like to being curious and creative.

Thus, elementary education must strive to enhance a child's ability to make informed, wise choices about his life as it relates to the life of others. Essential to this overarching aim is literacy in the areas of human experience.

### ORGANIZATION

One aspect about education is relatively clear; there is little relation between school organization and student achievement. In other words, we have not been able to demonstrate that different organizations produce specific differences in pupil performance. It is not that such differences cannot be achieved, only that they have not. What then can be said about how schools might be organized?

Historically the educational scene has witnessed a variety of units: dame schools, Lancasterian schools, graded schools, departmentalized schools, core schools, nongraded schools, platoon schools, track schools, pod schools, cluster schools, junior high schools, middle schools, continuous progress schools, and, recently, open schools. For a time, there was excitement about educational parks as well. One factor seems to have characterized each of these ground swells. As each attracted supporters, these converts held the firm conviction that the organization in which they placed their faith was the type best suited to all students.

However, one must at least consider Ole Sand's contention: "Human variability demands alternatives." One error that educators seem doomed to repeat is their assumption that an identical set of educational circumstances is equally productive for all students. Evidence to the contrary abounds. Thelen's study is one compelling piece of such evidence.<sup>4</sup>

If student learning is of sincere concern to educators, and if we accept that students have different learning styles, a persistence in offering only one pattern of schooling is an act of violence against what we claim to believe. Moreover, students in precollegiate programs are required by law to attend schools that, for



some, are sources of legally sanctioned failure. Specifically, if education involves enhancing a student's ability to make wise choices, it seems logical to offer him honest opportunities to choose. Further, if individual differences are to be considered, then school organizations must reflect this decision. Arguments to the contrary center on the mobility of Americans. Proponents of uniformity claim that, without it, children who move often may miss some portion of content. This argument assumes that every child in the United States must cover identical topics or his opportunity to learn has been diminished by whatever he may have missed. Responding to this issue falls outside the limits of this chapter.

Since considerable evidence suggests that no one pattern of school organization is responsive to the various learning styles presented by individual learners, there is but one admonition. School men and women must be willing to assume the additional burden of assessing the educational requirement of individual students and of providing, within the school's financial limits, the organizational patterns demanded by those differences that can be discerned and described. Suggestions include varying the length of the school day, establishing schools with different academic foci, teaching fundamental information through home-based computer terminals, and holding seminars rather than the usual classes. There is no dearth of ideas; what appears to be missing is a bedrock commitment to the purpose that we claim to support.

## ACTIVITIES

Research has revealed that the most regular student activity is "listening to a teacher." For decades the underlying, though rarely admitted, assumption has been that teaching is telling. We tell students through lecture, we tell them through films, we tell them through books, we tell them through demonstration. While techniques of teacher questioning have recently been given concerted attention, teachers are still inclined to tell and tell for nearly half the school day.

In 1956, Bloom and his associates offered a new way to think about educational outcomes and the means for attaining them.<sup>5</sup> From this scheme have come several others designed to

help teachers engage students in higher mental activities than simple recall and the paraphrasing of someone else's ideas. Apparently, no movement is assisting teachers in dealing with either intellectual tasks that take students into higher levels of thought or a variety of intangible and imprecisely measured outcomes. If abilities to deal with real problems in critical and creative ways should be developed in the schools, and if knowledge is to be more than material between covers of books, then practice must change.

While extensive examples are not available, a few may be helpful. First, teachers must be clear about the mental, affective, or psychomotor level at which they seek to have students operate. The kind of activity required at the level of memorization is quite different from the activity needed to help students become involved in analysis. Consider the following questions. (1) What is the street number of your residence? (2) You have two coins that total 55 cents. One of them is not a nickel. What are the two coins? Do you detect any difference in the ease with which you answered the two? Do you feel any different "in your head" as you sort out the answer? Most often the answer to these questions is an unqualified "yes." Therefore, a teacher must at least frame questions according to the mental or affective or psychomotor level toward which he seeks to move students. This approach, while departing from straight recall and paraphrasing, still relies upon the teacher as the source of appropriate questions and responses.

Second, a teacher must be acutely aware of individual learning styles. Some learn best through isolated activities, some through the printed media, some through heated but reasoned debate, some through trial and error, some through modeling another, some through graphic or performing arts, some through physical activity. For example, an individual may learn mathematics most readily from working with another student while he learns history best through quiet reading and reflection. A thorough appraisal of each student is mandatory so that a teacher does not misread and decide that a certain child always learns best in isolation.

To restate as a final caution, a single activity is rarely appropriate for all subject



matter and/or for all students at any given moment. The nature of the activity must account for the particular subject matter; the intellectual, affective, or psychomotor level one seeks to have students attain; and most important, the individual's learning style.

## EVALUATION

Evaluation in this context describes a student's progress toward one or more specified objectives. It is not judgmental, and is not to be equated with grading or reporting. Evaluation is to be a situation or an activity from which student and teacher can determine what new or similar direction is indicated for the student.

Since objectives differ in intent with respect to the cognitive, affective, or psychomotor domains, so must evaluation differ. As students exhibit different learning styles that require a variety of activities, so do they demonstrate these individual styles in relation to situations where their progress is determined. If true, the ubiquitous paper-and-pencil evaluation syndrome must be relegated to its appropriate place among the appraisal tools.

Too often overlooked, or dismissed as too cumbersome, are such activities as discussion, painting, movement, reading, social situations, shared diaries, revelation of aspirations, or even offhanded comments. To many, these measures are simply not respectable in detecting individual student progress. Effectiveness of the evaluation technique is often judged in terms of its observability and measurability. Emphasis on the latter two factors strongly suggests either that the objectives in which we claim to be interested are only window dressing, or that, while intangible outcomes of schooling are desirable, they are not amenable to clean and unequivocal measures. While their achievement is to be sought, progress toward them is impossible or difficult to determine, according to some; therefore, evaluation will consider only those aspects that lend themselves to neat and precise measurement. Someone once remarked, "Give me control of evaluation and I will control the curriculum."

If evaluation is so powerful and if evaluation becomes a matter of developing techniques only for those aspects of student development that can be observed, the curriculum will be

reduced to a series of activities which offer a student little hope for deriving much of internal worth from his compulsory schooling. Evaluation, then, must be based upon a scale that is as broad as the objectives to which it is supposedly related. It must reflect the enormous variability of the individuals whose progress is to be described and whose school success or failure is at stake. Questions of difficulty, imprecision, disagreement must be put aside in favor of honest attempts to evolve techniques that can be refined after experience provides direction. Instant perfection is not reality; constructive steps toward its achievement are.

## A CAUTION

Abroad in this land are examples of an activity that has captured the minds of educators since at least 1900. They have tried to take into the educational sphere the model provided by business. While some claim that educators have discovered the business model only in the past 12 years, Callahan carefully documents attempts that date from the turn of this century.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, there have been few surceases in such activities since that time. It has all the appearances of another rediscovered wheel.

Why should there be concern over this approach to educational decision-making? Why should there be warnings against such a basis for educational planning? The most significant reason lies in the difference between the purpose of industry and the purpose of education.

Industry, of necessity, seeks to produce, with as much efficiency as feasible, as large a quota of identical items as time, skill, and money allow. Products that deviate from acceptable standards are rejected, discarded, or sold as seconds or irregulars. Means used to produce a particular item are standardized; the relation between process and product is clear, observable, and measurable. If motion X is executed, product Y will result. The purpose of industry is to produce predetermined quotas of specified objects. The purpose of education is diametrically opposite.

Another major difference is the role or the image of those in positions of leadership in business. Such officials are termed management. The implications of the term are clear.