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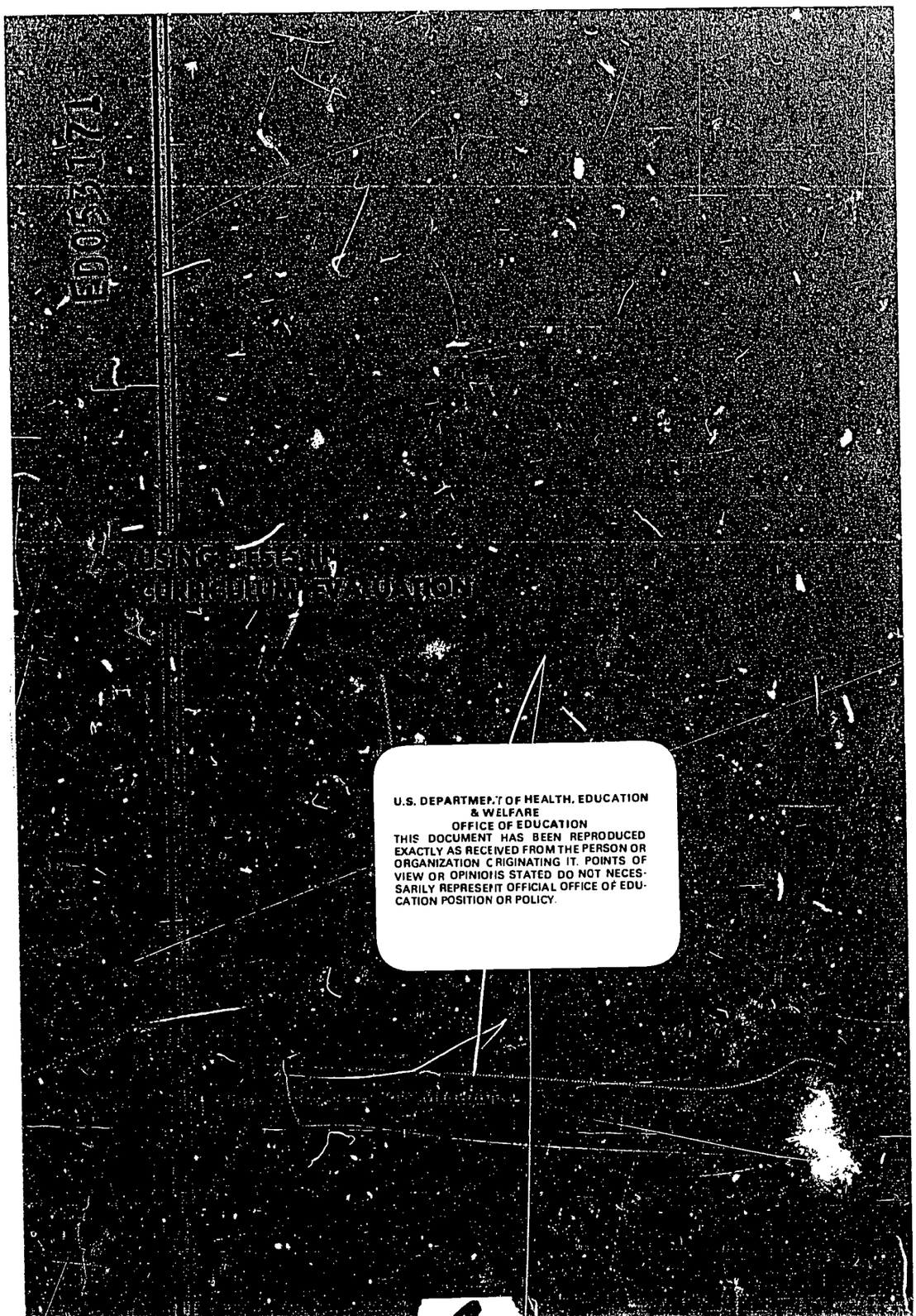
ABSTRACT

Three addresses from the Michigan School Testing Conference, "Curricular Accountability Through Testing" (Ted Ward); "The Role of State Testing in Curriculum Evaluation" (C. Philip Kearney); and "The Role of the Counselor in Curriculum Evaluation" (Mildred Peters) are included. (AG)



USING TESTS IN CURRICULUM EVALUATION

Addresses Delivered at the
Michigan School Testing Conference
Rackham Building, The University of Michigan
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CURRICULAR ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH TESTING

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From the point of view of a curriculum analyst, testing is a powerful tool. Testing is a shaper of the curriculum. Testing is second only to instructional materials as an index of what the teacher will be doing in the classroom. Testing constitutes a set of red flags and green flags, giving the teacher and the student a bit-by-bit feedback about what is *really* important in the educational establishment.

Tests should be a *reflection* of what is important, rather than a *determiner* of what is important for boys and girls to learn. When either tests or instructional materials are out of tune with what children most need to learn, the school may be doing the wrong thing—and perhaps doing the wrong thing rather effectively! When instructional programs are not carefully related to the needs of people in our society, it seems unfortunate, if not misguided, to build a testing program on the content of those programs. To build a structure of testing related to a status quo entrenches an establishment. Whether the materials of instruction should be built on the tests (the perennial criticism of what has emerged from the New York Regents' exams), or whether the tests should be built on the instructional materials, is only the most visible part of the issue. What is basic is that *both* the tests and the materials should relate to the most important needed learnings.

Tests must be based on something or other, and in the absence of widely agreed-upon specifications of objectives, the most widely used textbooks constitute, by default, a basis for test design. Perhaps there is no practical way to get broad-scale agreement on objectives, but the profession should be alert to the fact that testing formalizes implicit objectives, making them more visible, more controversial, and hopefully, more apt to be refined. Current emphasis on testing programs offers both challenge and hope. Confidence and hope for constructive impact of a testing program rests largely on the assumption that tests are testing the things that are truly important. Thus confidence may now be lacking to the extent that there are some profound misgivings about the adequacy of the current crop of textbooks and instructional experiences within the school.

It is indeed a sad commentary on the society that the most basic human issues seem to come in for so little educational attention. Perhaps as we see our efforts in the light of more careful assessment, this will finally come home to us. After three years of near-panic over the tragedies brought on

by our denial of basic human rights (and having achieved no profound closure) we now rush into a "new" anxiety: ecological disruption. How characteristic! What even *TIME* has tagged "Nixon's New Issue" has been called to our attention for many years by conscientious, concerned men and women; but now that it is a "technological" problem—now that the engineers and the technologists have decided their services are needed—it is suddenly dubbed an *official* problem. Perhaps it's a more safe problem because it seems to deal with *things* more than with people and their beliefs. But does it? Neither the problem of human carelessness or the integrity of the environment is apt to be solved technologically. Further, these problems are not apt to be solved by schooling alone. The forces in the society that teach us to place highest value on convenience and fun are far too formidable. Yet we hear of people and agencies at the state and national level preparing to relieve the national conscience by requiring the schools to add units and courses on environmental quality. What is there about our outlook, our perception, our consciousness that is so cognitively oriented, so fixed on facts that we leap to the proposition that any evil can be relieved by enough of the right information? Do the Dutch keep their flat, and potentially grim, grimy land colorful by teaching their children courses in flower planting? Do the Swiss keep their crowded rolling plains an inhabited showplace of the world by teaching units on public neatness? Indeed not; for centuries the traditions have been nurtured by public awareness and private conscience. Schools play a part, indeed, but they work hand-in-hand with larger expressions of a commonly held value system. Schools, especially schools obsessed with a cognitive emphasis, are a poor substitute for universal concern and universal responsibility about the rights and needs of man.

If this seems a digression, I beg your indulgence to see what the next few years will hold. If the large-scale movements toward wider use of testing go one way, we win; if they lead another way, we lose. The most profound challenges in our society are not cognitive. If testing makes us more aware of this, well and good. If testing makes us more preoccupied with cognitive learnings, schooling will become less and less relevant.

Tests, and especially testing programs that allow for comparisons among teachers or schools, exert considerable influence on the curriculum. Under certain circumstances this influence can be advantageous, but not always. Those who determine the tests to be used in a given instructional system hold a vital control over that system, whether or not they recognize it. The relative emphasis between effective and cognitive learnings illustrates this power rather well. Testing, because of human tendencies to opt for the easier, can increase the emphasis on cognitive learnings. As educated people

—better to say schooled people—ourselves, we are more aware of the functions of knowing—recall, recognition, association—than the functions of feeling and being. The management of cognitive information—facts, figures, dates, sequences, procedures, and techniques—commands our primary attention as teachers. But all the while, our students seem to be concentrating on liking, disliking, affiliating, disaffiliating, and other matters more of *being* than of knowing. It's as if teachers and students exist in separate worlds.

Just the other day a high school teacher told me that he thought affective objectives were "spooky"—that he felt more at home spelling out cognitive objectives. This man is not unique. He's absolutely right that cognitive matters are easier to specify and to test. "Ay, there's the rub." Our system is more strongly affected by what is easiest, than by what is best. As teachers and curriculum workers, we need help from test designers; we can't afford to let over-emphasis on cognitive learning further isolate us from the affective world of our students. We must work together to find better ways to specify objectives and develop tests for the affective changes our efforts produce in learners. For example, as we find the ecology issue sweeping in, let's get hold of it both in the affective and in the cognitive domains. What a precedent we could create if we insisted that every unit of studies in environmental quality should have clearly defined affective objectives and that every test in this field should test for affective learning!

It isn't all that "spooky." I commend to your attention the thoughtful and stimulating April, 1969, issue of *Theory Into Practice*. Jack Frymier has done there a great service in pulling together many pieces relating to the whole problem of teaching the values that play a greater role than does "knowledge" in determining human behavior. The thorough behaviorist owes it to himself not to be ignorant of the part played by values and beliefs.

Another concern is that testing can tend to produce blind spots in evaluation. This contention may be rather obscure, but perhaps we can see it this way: Test items are ordinarily representations of instructional objectives, explicitly and implicitly held. Instructional objectives are invariably expressed in terms of what we want to happen. Thus, tests are characteristically limited to assessing the degree of presence of some desired behavior. Since some changes induced by schooling are negative, ordinary tests can completely fail to pick them up. Failure to assess undesirable learnings is an important oversight. Here, too, we need creative help from test designers.

Lest you have begun to suspect that I have come here not to praise testing but to bury it, let me quickly balance off these anxieties about the contemporary scene. From an instructional systems viewpoint, testing is an absolute necessity. It is, or can be, a stimulant for change and improvement.

Most of you are personnel specialists, or other than classroom teachers. Much of what I have said here today speaks primarily of the classroom aspects of the curriculum. Because, regardless of how you define "curriculum," action is where the teacher is. I believe that those of you who do understand testing—its potentialities and its limitations—have a job to do. Someone needs to get through to teachers about what testing can mean in terms of improvement of the curriculum. The issues of testing, state and national assessment, and so forth, have been unfortunately polarized. You are "all out" for it or "all out" against it. Perhaps the only way we can get together is to focus on better educational experiences for boys and girls—and then to discover the vital roles that testing plays in stimulating, identifying, and quantifying improvement.

In an instructional system, testing is essential because it produces data to serve as a basis for decision-making. Data is essential if decision-making is to be anything but intuitive. Ay, here's yet another rub! Highly insightful teachers, especially in earlier and less complex eras, made intuitive educational planning a fine art. For various reasons, the scene has changed. The quality of educational planning is somewhat out of joint. A restive, overtaxed, and anxious public seeks scapegoats. Yet in a relatively informed society, liquidating a scapegoat that may be needed again isn't reasonable; instead, he is made to "toe the mark," preferably for "his own good." So now the name of the game is *accountability*. Although we may question the motives behind much of the pressure for accountability, there is something here that can be turned to professional advancement.

As it stands, teachers are apparently more able to "sense" things than to *see* things. A recent study in the Texas Research and Development Center for Teacher Education doesn't do much for the hope that teachers are being accurate in their sensing of what children are capable of being and doing. (Good, Thomas L., *et al.* "Teacher Assessment of Pupil Potential.") Thus I am especially grateful for materials that help teachers become more able to appreciate and wisely use tests. The NCME Measurement in Education Series, if the quality can continue to match that of the first issue—Robert L. Thorndike's "Helping Teachers Use Tests"—should constitute a helpful resource.

Accountability, in professional terms, is the evaluation of system outcomes in light of objectives and costs. There is reason to believe that increased public confidence in the schools would follow from sincere efforts to assure that what is supposed to happen in schools is indeed happening. People are entranced by the idea that learning can be made subject to the terms of a contract. Illustrations are appearing frequently in recent months. Don Davies, Bureau Chief of the Educational Personnel Development Act,

moved "accountability" into the spotlight with his pronouncement last fall: "We are moving in a direction we have been contemplating for a long time —shifting primary learning responsibility from the student to the school. It also means a lot of people are going to be shaken up."

Ralph Becker of the Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education tells of the way this *is* being implemented: "Agencies [must] accomplish what they say there are going to accomplish in their proposals within a given time. If these specifications are not met, a penalty may ensue."

The director of a dropout prevention program in St. Louis has pledged to reduce the dropout rate by 10 per cent in the schools where his OE-sponsored program operates. ("New Programs Face Stricter Evaluation," *American Education*, Vol. 6, No. 1.) Lee Wickline of the Division of Plans and Supplementary Centers talks about one form of penalty: "If a project director proposes to continue the same processes the second year that proved ineffective the first, the likelihood of his receiving funds would certainly be less than if he had succeeded or if he had proposed to change his methods."

The "Yardstick Project" in Ohio reflects this sort of thinking but without the federal clout. Their watch-words are "growth gauge" and "effectiveness of decisions."

Whether industry's newfound role in education is the cause or effect of this surge toward accountability the historians will have to judge; but it's in there somewhere. By now, Dorsett Educational Systems' Texarkana project has put both Dorsett and Texarkana on the educator's map. Their innovation is the "guaranteed performance" contract. The achievement gains of children will determine the amount of payment Dorsett collects. Preliminary findings, according to Dorsett's own impartial surveys, strongly suggest that the old extrinsic rewards argument has been settled for once and for all. ("Startling Reading Gains Hinted in Texarkana," *Education U.S.A.*, February 2, 1970). You can just bet Dorsett's going to get paid!

San Diego has called in McGraw-Hill's Educational Development Laboratories on a similar basis. The *Washington Post* called it a "hard-headed approach to upgrading the nation's schools." (At least they didn't call it "tough-minded.")

Excesses? Surely. A passing fancy? Maybe not. To gain perspective consider what evaluations have been showing. For example, the National Advisory Committee on Dyslexia and Related Reading Disorders, upon completion of a year of study, reports a sort of "directionless shambles" posing as reading instruction across the nation. (*Reading Disorders in the United States*, United States Office of Education.) The Commission on Instructional Technology reports waste and failure in reference to one after

another of the efforts to improve teaching through technology. (*To Improve Learning*, United States Office of Education.) These harsh indictments are neither scarce nor, apparently, unfounded.

Much of the current enthusiasm for making important ideas work can energize professional improvement. "Accountability" can't be all bad! It's but one specific mode of responsibility, perhaps a strange one just now, but maybe it is a blessing in disguise. Surely a knowledgeable use of testing will play a key role in turning the concept of accountability from a threat to an impetus. Consider the following five suggestions about the curricular function of testing:

1. Examine and reflect on test items.
   a. What do the items suggest about what is really being valued by the educational establishment?
   b. What relationship is there between what is being taught and what is being tested?
2. Consider any dissonance among objectives, teaching, and testing to be a mandate for change.
3. Continually challenge the validity of the educational objectives in the system; keep them specific, valid, and relevant to the needs of society.
4. Strive for balance among the learning outcomes to be tested; avoid undue emphasis on those things that are merely easy to test.
5. Value evidence about what is being accomplished by teaching.

Recapitulating, here are the major contentions with which I've tried to deal in this presentation:

1. Testing makes teaching objectives more formal, more visible, more controversial, and, with leadership, more apt to be refined.
2. Testing provides data on the effects of an educational experience or system.
3. Testing provides data on the learner, allowing an attunement between his learning (in terms of capability, readiness, needs, and progress) and the instructional experiences provided by the system.
4. Testing provides a control component—an informal or formal force for conformity of the individual instructional units to the goals of the system.

Two specific cautions have been suggested:

1. Testing can increase the emphasis on cognitive learnings. (While this is not inherently wrong, it certainly can get out of hand.)
2. Testing can tend to produce blind spots in evaluation—especially with reference to failing to identify the unwanted learnings that occur.

In closing, I'd like to share a professional experience that has had much personal meaning for me. Becoming a writer of programmed instruction can do interesting things for one. Programmed instruction is a peculiar art form. It's not much like any other form of teaching; it is even less like the ordinary sort of writing. You begin as though planning to teach—you think through the content; you ponder over the likely capabilities of the intended learners; you find a place to begin that seems reasonable for even your most dull target student; and you start in. Many tedious hours later you are ready to try out a few frames of the tentative program. As you likely know, these field trials with real learners, one by one or in small groups, constitute the source of real quality and value in a good program. Each step in the program must be reworked until it *does* teach. It isn't enough that it represents the content accurately. It isn't enough that it looks logical and reasonable. It isn't enough that the learner can "get through" it. The issue is *does it teach?* You test the program rather than the learner.

This frame of mind doesn't come easy. In watching dozens of teachers go through the process of becoming competent writers of programmed instruction, I have been impressed that in the typical frame of mind, the teacher at first raises the question, "Can this student learn from this material?" Yet the frame of mind he slowly grows into asks, "Can this material teach this student?"

I've come to value this second frame of mind. A more accountable and responsive establishment could result if, in addition to the needed data on learners, their capabilities, readiness, needs, and progress, there would also be an emphasis on testing for system evaluation: Do the instructional procedures and materials teach? What? How much? To whom? If testing is to have a positive impact on the curriculum, teachers and administrators must be carefully tutored to accept less defensively and to *utilize* feedback about the effects of their efforts. If teachers could get this frame of mind it would make a substantial difference in the quality of schooling. We would see more attention to refinement of teaching, more attention to definition and validation of objectives, more majoring on the important things, less confusion and haphazard slippage. But we have a long way to go.

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THE ROLE OF STATE TESTING IN CURRICULUM EVALUATION

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Let me begin by telling you how delighted I am that I—as a representative of the Michigan Department of Education—have been asked to address a session of this year's Michigan School Testing Conference. I would like to express my appreciation to the Advisory Committee and to its Chairman, Frank Womer, for this opportunity and also for the additional opportunities which are being provided during the Clinic Sessions to visit with many of you regarding different facets of the Michigan Assessment program.

I bring to you also the greetings of Dr. John Porter, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, who has asked that I give you his hello and express his hopes that you have a worthwhile and productive conference.

Also, let me express my pleasure that the Conference has seen fit to include in its proceedings discussions of testing, evaluation, and assessment strategies at all three levels of school government—local, state, and national. For most of you, your prime concern, of course, is the development and implementation of testing, evaluation, and assessment strategies that will prove useful within your own local school districts as you go about the very serious business of building more effective educational programs for the young people of Michigan.

Additionally, because many of these programs rely on federal funding and because the Congress and the nation increasingly are demanding information about their effectiveness, we are now witnessing rapidly expanding and—I think—very promising, evaluation and assessment activities in this area.

As for the state's role, I suspect that—at least until this year—its efforts in evaluation were most often looked upon not as evaluation *per se*, but rather as simply filling the role of intermediary or connecting link between the federal and local levels and facilitating that "exercise" called evaluation which—according to Egon Guba—the conventional schoolman defines as:

> Something required from on high that takes time and pain to produce but which has very little significance for action.

The posture sees the state merely as the agency through which these requests are funneled down to you and then back up to the federal level. And, I suspect, in many cases there has been and still is plenty of evidence to warrant this view.

However, I think the notion of the state agency's role in evaluation as being simply a "forms-funneling mechanism" for someone at the national level is being dispelled to some extent in several states, including Michigan. There are state agencies which are on the move and which are beginning to plan and implement testing, evaluation, and assessment strategies of their own—over and above the federal and national programs. Some of the work we are currently doing in Michigan, I think, will help to further dispel this notion of the state agency as merely an intermediary or connecting link—and a weak one at that. And, in the general context of today's theme and topic, I would like to share with you some of the problems and issues that we in the Department of Education have faced—and still are facing—in planning and implementing evaluation strategies not for federally funded programs necessarily, but rather for state and locally funded programs, and which strategies include provisions for state testing as one of the components.

In my remarks today I am going to take the liberty of expanding the topic and speak about the role of state assessment strategies rather than deal exclusively—or what I would term narrowly—with the role of state testing in curriculum evaluation. For us testing is only one of the elements or components in an assessment or evaluation program.

Let me lay some further groundwork by clearing up any possible misconceptions about my own particular expertise. I must openly state that I consider myself neither a professional researcher nor a professional evaluator—in the strict sense of those terms. By training, experience, and inclination, I am an administrator, with, however, a particular interest in seeing that there are developed means or methodologies by which more and better information is made available to people who make decisions about education.

Secondly, in my present role, I am primarily interested in serving the needs of decision makers at the state level. Our primary purpose as a Bureau of Research is—and, I think, should be—to provide better and more comprehensive information to two specific audiences. *First,* we must provide such information to the state legislature so that it will be better able to enact legislation appropriate to the educational needs of the State of Michigan. (Each time I say this, I am accused of ascribing rationality to a process that many consider somewhat irrational—namely the legislative process.) *Second,* our Bureau has the responsibility of providing

more and better information to the State Board of Education and to staff in the Department of Education in order to facilitate their efforts in identifying needs and priorities as they go about planning and directing the improvement of education in the state. Additionally, I feel we have a responsibility to the citizens of the state to provide them with information which will increase their understanding of the attainments, the needs, and the problems of the schools.

A secondary purpose—at least secondary for us at this point in time and within our limited resources—is to assist local school districts in their efforts to identify needs and priorities as they plan and administer local school programs. Our role then, as regards curriculum evaluation, is of a much more general nature than is your role at the district and building level. We are primarily interested, as some would put it, in the "big picture."

Ralph Tyler, in a little book which is some twenty years old but which is still one of the best things I've ever seen on curriculum, has identified four fundamental questions which must be answered in developing any curriculum and plan of instruction.

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

It is with the first and fourth questions that our present state-wide assessment program is concerned. The second and third questions are essentially questions about the process, about approaches to learning and curriculum strategies. It is, of course, the fourth question which gives rise to the use of state-wide tests, because evidence of instructional outcomes for Michigan's schools, at least on a state-wide basis, was until this year virtually non-existent.

And now let me share with you some of the general problems we faced and still are facing in our attempts to plan, develop, and implement a state-wide program for a periodic and comprehensive assessment of educational progress.

Our first problem was to select an appropriate model or theoretical formulation upon which to base our assessment efforts. The formulation we chose to employ is based on a theory of interrelationships between school system performance levels and certain factors which bear a strong relationship to educational performance. This theory holds that school system

performance levels are influenced by a host of factors, both school-related and non-school—related. It holds that, in any effort to assess our schools, measures in addition to performance measures should be collected and used in analyzing and reporting results. In short, we chose to employ an "input-process-output" model as the basic theoretical construct guiding our work. I must hasten to add, however, that in our efforts to date we have not addressed the very complex problem of looking at or attempting to include the process component in our assessment program, or, as I stated earlier, we will not be able to answer Tyler's second and third questions.

While we realize that getting a handle on this component of the model has consistently stumped some of the best minds in the field, we do certainly think that it merits consideration as a possible addition, over the long run, to the assessment program.

Our next problem centered on identifying or framing the priority questions, that is, what were the basic questions we wanted our assessment data to be able to answer? Our first effort resulted in delineating the following five questions:

1. How do desired educational outcomes in Michigan differ according to resource levels and the background characteristics of pupils and communities?
2. How well are the pupils in Michigan's schools progressing in the attainment of desired educational outcomes?
3. How well are Michigan's schools providing the resources necessary for increasing the attainment of desired educational outcomes among their pupils?
4. Where do the greatest weaknesses exist in Michigan's schools in terms of both the provision of school resources and the attainments of pupils?
5. How may the resources of Michigan's schools be used more effectively to produce additional progress in pupil attainment?

A subsequent effort, aimed at achieving increased specificity—and indeed parsimony—, resulted in selecting the following four questions as basic to our purposes; these four questions we consider to be the guiding questions of the assessment effort:

1. For the state as a whole, what are the present levels of inputs and the levels of educational performance?
2. For Michigan's geographic regions and community types, what are the present levels of inputs and the levels of educational performance?

3. Do schools that score high (or low or average) on the various input measures also score high (or low or average) in educational performance levels?
4. What changes over time may be noted in the answers to the above questions?

A third critical problem we faced—and for that matter still face- -is the problem of uniformity or non-uniformity of goals. For unless we could deal with common goals—or common outcomes—how could we ever begin to assess the progress of the state's educational system?

One of the baic assumptions of the current effort to develop a comprehensive program for the assessment of educational progress is that there are common purposes and goals toward which all public schools in Michigan should be working. This does not deny the existence of other goals which may be unique to a given district, a given building, a given class, or a given pupil. Rather, it is an assertion of a commonality of educational purposes throughout the schools of Michigan. A recent bulletin of the National Education Association puts it this way:

> Throughout our country there is a similarity of educational objectives—and a diversity of means to achieve them. Schools everywhere are teaching children to read, to use language effectively, to compute, to solve problems requiring the collection and application of relevant data, to develop employable skills, to understand our government, and to take an informed part in civic affairs. These are common aims; we differ in the means we use to attain them.

We submit that the common aims of Michigan's public schools can be identified and developed through a consensus achieved among educators and lay citizens. In assessment efforts to date, one common goal has been identified—namely that, as a result of schooling, children will acquire basic skills in the use of words and numbers. Indeed, the basic skills component of the 1969–70 assessment program rests firmly on this assumption and on the further assumption that techniques are now available to begin assessment in this area.

The State Board of Education recently appointed a Task Force on the Goals of Michigan Education and assigned to the group as its central charge to begin to identify and develop additional goals for the state's educational system. It is hoped that at an early date the task force will produce a draft document delineating what they feel these common goals should be. This draft document hopefully will be short enough to be dis-

cussed in public meetings, yet long enough and specific enough to suggest the kinds of pupil performance that would represent progress toward each goal.

It is vitally important that the draft document be subjected to review and reaction by individuals and groups throughout the state so that all elements in the broad spectrum of our society will have an opportunity to contribute to this important effort. This review effort might be achieved through appointing a much larger and more broadly representative committee, through a series of regional meetings or hearings, through soliciting written comments and reactions from individuals and groups, or through a combination of these. What is essential is *providing an opportunity for all who are concerned to be involved and to contribute to the effort.*

Following this review and subsequent modifications growing out of it, the task force will forward its recommended statement of common goals to the State Board of Education for review and subsequent adoption. It is further anticipated that the task force would consider recommending to the State Board that the Board should hold periodic conferences with school people and representatives of the general public to secure counsel on refining, clarifying, and otherwise improving the statement of goals as first adopted. In our dynamic and rapidly changing society, there is every reason to believe that a statement of goals deemed pertinent for the beginning years of the decade may not completely suffice for the closing years of the decade.

And, then, the more difficult task will be to see that the goals identified be translated into pupil performance and techniques be developed which will give an indication of our progress toward these goals.

Another problem we face, of course, is the inadequacy of current methodologies for measuring many of the important objectives of education. This, as you well know, is a legitimate criticism. We have been measuring achievement in education for a long time and technologies in these areas are relatively well developed. However, measures of the "higher mental processes," of creative and imaginative thinking, of desirable attitudes and interest, and of other vastly important aspects of education would seem to demand better tools than are now available. Instruments to measure these areas are being developed, but are yet—I think—very inadequate. For us, this did not mean that we should wait for perfect tools. It meant we should admit the imperfections of our instruments and work to improve evaluation techniques over time. It also meant that we should be very cautious in the interpretation of results.

In an assessment of educational progress for Michigan, we emphasized that: (1) the measurement of instructional outcomes need not, in and of

itself, be considered a sufficient indicator of educational performance but rather just one component of the many varied state and local efforts to understand the process of education; and (2) the assessment effort need not limit itself to the "easy-to-measure" aspects of pupil achievement. We maintain that, over time, a comprehensive battery of instruments could be developed to survey both cognitive and affective outcomes within a wide range of subject areas, and efforts could be continuously underway to improve imperfect assessment methodologies.

There are, of course, many other problems of a general nature surrounding this entire effort, not the least of which is the nagging suspicion that the data may have little or no influence on key policy or administrative decisions. But, I suspect, that's one of the hazards of any evaluative effort. And, of course, there is the ever-present danger that such data will be misused or used in less than an objective fashion.

I wish that we had the time to deal with some additional problems of an even more specific nature which we faced and are still facing. But we shall have to reserve these for the clinic sessions. And here, particularly, is where I would appreciate the comments and reactions of those of you who will be participating in the clinic sessions, for I am not at all sure we have yet hit upon the right solutions in all cases.

It takes no great mind to conclude that the assignments at hand—namely, planning and developing a comprehensive assessment program as well as implementing the basic skills component immediately—are indeed formidable. The implementation of a meaningful statewide assessment program will be a complex task necessitating careful planning over a period of many months, not only in terms of questions of design, methodology, and instrumentation, but also in terms of acquiring the involvement and cooperation of school people, lay citizens, legislators, and other concerned individuals and groups. Completion of these efforts will not automatically alleviate the educational problems facing the state; it will, however, provide information to those concerned with those problems. Used creatively, that information can result in improved education for Michigan children.

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THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELOR IN CURRICULUM EVALUATION

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It is a well recognized fact in our society that education is a powerful factor in social mobility. It is also a powerful factor in the role or roles one will have in his lifetime. This has not been as true for some minority groups but the trend is changing.

Indeed the proponents of school-wide testing programs and those violently opposed basically have a common goal, namely, the improvement of the quality of education. The leaders of the accountability movement are aiming for school faculties to do a better job of teaching, although oftentimes accountability of all parties to the crime is not always considered. Being a firm believer that learning is a collaborative effort, this educator holds to the idea that all parties should be involved in setting the goals and marking the score cards.

This then raises the question of what role counselors shall play in this changing educational scene. Over the years the role of the school or college counselor has not always been clear, and we certainly have come through an extended period of time when the counselor's role has taken on a clinical dimension rather than one of counseling and guidance for educational improvement. It would almost seem that in our anxiety over role definition we had to become the "good guys" and make the hard nosed teachers into the "bad guys." Or, to placate teachers and administrators we have been pushed into the roles of crisis mopper-uppers or grand bookkeepers of schedule making.

Theoretically, we tell ourselves that we are interested in aiding each individual to develop to his greatest potential, and yet to some degree we isolate ourselves from a critical look at the quality of education surrounding young people in the daily school setting.

Even if we could be sure of quality education in every school, we could not guarantee that all students would or could learn equally well, for learning is dependent on the sum total of all of their experiences and the nature of their biological development (1). The educational endeavor is ever in dynamic interaction with the nature of the learner and that of society or, rather, societies. Societies, Erik Erikson states, "*confirm* an individual and determine tasks and roles for him in which he can *recognize* himself and feel recognized" (1). The school is an institution within

societies, an institution that should aid the student in recognizing himself and in feeling recognized.

If the counselor is to help in this process he will have to attend to something more than individual appointments, the testing program, and orientation.

The real work of the school takes place in classrooms and in peer relationships. Although we hope to aid our counselees in formulating appropriate career goals and developing personal growth, the daily feedback to students in classes and from their peer groups has the real impact on them. The day to day lively confrontation in learning or deadly dullness has a heavy share in shaping the lives of young people.

Nevitt Sanford (2) states: "An educational model in the broadest sense of the word means leading forth the potentialities of the person, but educational institutions in the United States, by and large, have insisted on restricting their activities to cognitive functions." One might add that such restriction does not take into consideration individual differences in cognitive style. Unfortunately, most curricular practices are carried on as if all learners were perceiving the same cognitive material in the same way. Sanford feels that "professionals working on human problems" should be familiar with the persons involved and with the social system in which they live.

Practices of counselors in the schools are to a great extent dichotomized. On the one hand they work to become familiar with the persons involved, but data from the Russell Sage foundation studies (3) (4) on the use of standardized tests and their impact on teachers, students, and administrators show that a large percent of public school counselors consider I.Q. test scores of great influence on them in counseling on occupational plans. The same studies show that little interpretation of results are made to parents or indeed even to students. The studies also show that test results have little influence on curricular change. Instead, they are used in judgment of students and not for diagnostics. The data also showed that we group students for learning on the basis of test scores, and yet Walter Borg's (5) research showed that ability groupings in contrast to heterogeneous groups made no difference to the middle achievers but brought about a decline in the learning of low achievers and depressed the self image of high achievers in the homogeneous groups. Perhaps these practices have something to do with 11.7% of public school student respondents in the Russell Sage study not having plans for after graduation and 28.7% of them not having a positive attitude toward themselves.

In defense of counselors, they may have been reluctant to talk of curricular evaluation because they did not wish to intrude on teacher territory

or maybe because they haven't known how. Interestingly enough, individual counselors whom I have known who were very innovative teachers have tried to influence the curriculum in their schools.

Another feeling is that this leadership is part of the administrator's role.

The climate of the '60's convinces me more than ever that education will only be improved when school people are willing to share influence and counselors have a golden opportunity to take leadership. Recently in a two day workshop of superintendents, principals, both elementary and secondary, curriculum directors, and school finance officers, we asked all participants to indicate how much influence various segments of the staff and students and parents have and in another section to indicate how much they should have. On another instrument we asked them to respond to a long list of items about staff interaction. The data showed that where staffs were willing to share influence, invariably they also showed better staff communication and decision-making. This would seem to have implications for us. If students, teachers, counselors, and administrators can share collaboratively in designing school programs and feel free to innovate, share in counting the score, and all build greater openness and flexibility, there is hope for improved school practices.

Realistically you have a right to ask, "Where do I take hold?" First of all, we must not allow our schools to lock themselves into feeling the test program is *the* major evaluative instrument for the curriculum. With the recent machine scoring, rarely if ever does one examine internal items of the tests to see unique strengths and weaknesses and to diagnose ways in which our curricular practices are working or not.

Many lay people are going to be gravely misled because of legislation on state-wide and federal testing. As I mentioned earlier, the movement is perceived as a way of making school people prove they earn their salaries. If Johnny can't read, for whatever reasons, it's entirely the fault of the school. Now, I am for accountability of all professionals and parents as well. I'm much more distressed over the obvious, namely, that our testing programs have had little effect on our practices, e.g., we know well that vocabulary building and ear training have a lot to do with reading, but rarely do we hear children in discussion in classes testing out the use of new words and concepts.

Absolute test scores will never give more than one small piece of data about the quality of education in any school. We have not fully utilized self-testing activities and the encouragement of teachers to refine their own day-to-day evaluations. Carl Rogers (6) in his *Freedom to Learn* includes an illustration, from a teacher, of students setting up their own learning contracts for the day. Rogers' illustration places the responsibility

for the contract on the learner and not on someone who polices his learning. Such contracts do not have to be school-wide forms. They can be as innovative as any group can make them.

What all this leads to is a conviction that curriculum evaluation is an on-going process in which students, teachers, administrators, counselors, and other ancillary personnel engage.

Unfortunately we have had some recent examples in high schools where the administration and students proposed changes but faculty were sidestepped in the policy-making. That's almost as bad as our old ways of making policy by the dripolator method rather than by percolating up and down.

There is no one way to develop the kind of evaluation I'm suggesting. Of course we need some standardized measures of academic progress, but we also need to take a hard look at attitudes and values, our own as well as those of students and parents, and the ways in which all of us perceive ourselves, and try to find out the why of our state of affairs.

In this process leadership of counselors will be necessary to encourage collaboration. Consultation with teachers about individuals and groups provides the vehicle for development of collaboration. Both individual and group counseling are other means for building this atmosphere.

For us to be influential in the improvement of curriculum and the quality of education it will be necessary to perceive teachers, students, and parents as people whose help you need. Once they get past the shock that we mean it, they in turn will reciprocate. In other words, it's everyone's job to work at it and not just a principal or a counselor or a teacher.

Some reluctance may arise among the professionals because in our times there is high anxiety over shared power. If we can be less afraid to seek help from everyone and thereby dignify others, it probably will be less painful than setting up one force against another. This implies the need for the widest communication network possible. When all parties are in the know, the need to be suspicious is certainly reduced.

Two common human errors are underestimating the intelligence of the other person and keeping thoughts and feelings to yourself that really should be shared. Someone with much less education than I may have the much needed insight that will help solve a problem.

Finally, some of us will have to shake off the idea that we don't know what goes into the curriculum. There is no one person who knows entirely. Each school setting has its own uniqueness. Of course some will have more expertise than others. Counselors can make a major input on the interests and concerns of students, the appropriateness of situations in relation to

the developmental period of the student, and perhaps an increased student knowledge of the community and its resources.

Schools are for learning. The major vehicle is the curriculum. Counselors and other specialists are primarily there to further the quality of learning. Involvement of students, teachers, administrators, specialists, parents, and counselors is necessary if we wish everyone to be accountable. Collaboration makes goal reaching easier but requires openness, flexibility, and trust.

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