DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 117 739 CS 202 492

AUTHOR	Donelson, Ken, Ed.
TITLE	Back-to-the-Basics in English Teaching.
INSTITUTION	Arizona English Teachers Association, Tempe.
PUB DATE	Feb 76
NOTE	157p.; Occasional light print
JOURNAL CIT	Arizona English Bulletin; v18 n2 p1-152 February 1976 (Entire Issue)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$8.69 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	*Basic Skills; Composition (Literary); *English Instruction; Higher Education; Humanities; *Language Arts; Reading; Secondary Education

ABSTRACT

In this issue, the writers focus on the "basics" in English teaching, some offering suggestions on ways of altering present conditions, some commenting generally (in assessments, defenses, or attacks) cn the basics, and some presenting specific discussions of basics in teaching the various language arts components. A few of the articales and authors are: "'SCISAB' Spelled Backwards Is 'Basic'!" by Allan Dittmer, "The Emerging of New 'Basic Fundamentals' of English Media" by Nancy Cromer, "He Who Can Does--He Who Cannot Tests" by Joseph Mersano, "Relevance Is Out, Classics Are In" by Florence Miller, "The Indifferent Bell: A Short Diatribe Against Teaching the Basics" by G. Lynn Nelson, "Writing, Prisons, and the English Teacher" by Richard Koch, "The Little Car That Could" by Stephen Dunning, "Basic Backwardness" by Charles Weingartner, and "Humanities--Basic to Total Education" by Martha P. Brincklow. (JM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED117739

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

BACK-TO-THE-BASICS IN ENGLISH TEACHING

Volume 18 - - - Number 2

February 1976

CS 202 492

ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN - - - - - - - - A Member of the NCTE Exchange Agreement

The ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN is a publication of the Arizona English Teachers Association, a non-profit state affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English. The ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN exists to create effective statewide articulation of English teachers at all levels, to increase awareness of new ideas, programs, and movements in English, and to improve instruction at every level.

The ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN is published three years each year, in October, February, and April. It is supported and subsidized by the Arizona English Teachers Association, Northern Arizona University, the University of Arizona, and Arizona State University. Membership in the Arizona English Teachers Association (including subscription to the ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN) is $5.50 the year (a three-year membership is available for $15.00). Send application for membership to

James Reith, AETA Treasurer
Scottsdale Education Center
3811 N. 44th St.
Phoenix, AZ 85018

Make checks payable to AETA and include both school and home addresses (making clear to which address the BULLETIN is to be sent). Please include zip codes for both addresses.

Subscriptions for the ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN alone are $5.50 for the three issues within the state of Arizona. Subscriptions for addresses outside the state are $7.00 for the three issues. Check for the prices of back issues with the editor since the costs vary considerably from issue to issue. Many of our back issues are now available from NCTE. Check their yearly catalogue of resources for exact costs. A copy of NCTE's catalogue can be had by writing NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Ill. 61801. For subscriptions for the BULLETIN alone, please write

Ken Donelson, Editor, AEB
English Department
Arizona State University
Tempe, AZ 85281

Subjects for the 1975-1976 issues: October (Non-Print Media and the English Class); February (The Back to the Basics Issue); and April (Adolescent Literature Revisited).

ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 1976 - - - - - - - - - BACK-TO-THE-BASICS IN ENGLISH TEACHING

CONTENTS

SCISAB Spelled Backwards is BASICS!
Allan Dittmer, University of Nebraska 1
Of Revelance (sic) and the Basics
Bertrand Evans, Brookings, Oregon 9
The Indifferent Bell: A Short Diatribe Against Teaching the Basics
G. Lynn Nelson, Arizona State University 13
A Forward Urging: Diagnosis and Prescription in Basic Skills Classes
Janet N. Freemke, Glendale Educational Management System. 16
Getting Back to the Basics in Composition
Frank J. D'Angelo, Arizona State University 19
The Emerging of New "Basic Fundamentals" of English: Media
Nancy Cromer, University of South Carolina. 24
Forging Ahead to the Basics
Joseph F. Brunner, Montclair State College, New Jersey. 28
Back to What Base?
Charles E. Davis, University of Arizona 32
Ronald Reagan's Rigorous Drills and the Swinging '60's English Electives
Beverly Haley, Fort Morgan High School, Fort Morgan, Colorado 35
"Let's Review Our Deductions Rather Than Race to Retreat and Erase All Choice"
Bette Bacon, Westwood High School, Mesa 38
"The Basics" in English Grammar
Ronald R. Butters, Duke University. 42
Basics: A Re-definition
Lee Odell, State University of New York at Buffalo. 45
Humanities--Basic to Total Education
Martha P. Brincklow, Dunedin High School, Dunedin, Florida. 52
He Who Can Does--He Who Cannot Tests
Joseph Mersand, York College of City University of New York 56
Back to the Basics--Teacher Authority and Responsibility
Leo Croteau, Sahuaro High School, Tucson. 64
Relevance Is Out, Classics Are In
Florence Miller 66
The New Natural Environment
Jim L. Cromer, University of South Carolina 68
A Laboratory Approach to Teaching "The Basics" in College Composition Courses
Alma A. Ilacqua, LeMoyne College, Syracuse, New York. 78
The Short, Unhappy Life of Career Education
John Simmons, Florida State University. 82
Back to the Basics with Poetry
Sallee Clements, Arizona State University 87
Yellowed Road Maps and Rearview Mirrors: A Means of Approaching the Basics
R. Baird Shuman, Duke University. 94
Monitoring Language Development: Evaluation and "The Basics"
Bryant Fillion, OISE, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. 97
Writing, Prisons, and the English Teacher
Richard Koch, University of Iowa. 104
English Education: Forging a New Humanism
George H. Henry, University of Delaware 112

The Little Car That Could
Stephen Dunning, University of Michigan 123
Back to the Basics? Some Persistent Questions, Some Old Answers. 126
The Back to the Basics Issue and Film Study
Pat Stewart, Miami High School, Miami, Arizona. 132
Forward to a Balance in the Basics
Thomas R. Giblin, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. 135
Forward to the Basics (And Away from Pseudobasics)
Collett B. Dilworth, Fayetteville City Schools, North Carolina. 137
Basic Backwardness
Charles Weingartner, University of South Florida. 139
Non-Verbal Communication Skills Survey/Analysis
Carroll G. Anderson, Williams Air Force Base. 145
Shoptalk. 8, 15, 23, 27, 31, 34, 37, 55, 63, 65, 77, 81, 93, 96, 103, 111, 122, 125, 131, 134, 138, 144, 152

Preface to the Issue - - - - - - - BACK-TO-THE-BASICS IN ENGLISH TEACHING

Earlier issues of the BULLETIN have touched on various "basics" in various areas of English teaching, but this issue is devoted to that much-praised, much-maligned, much-used, much-misused, much-misunderstood term, "basics." While English teachers may have grown tired of words like "relevance," "viable," "meaningful," "thrust," and other assorted linguistic garbage, no word has been used so widely in the last few years to describe the lamentable state of American education and English teaching as that word "basics," usually in clauses like "We need to return to the basics" or "The basics are essential to any education worthy the name" or "Why aren't the schools teaching the basics?" Any English teacher who reads the newspaper could find headlines in papers as different as ARIZONA REPUBLIC, PHOENIX GAZETTE, NY TIMES, LOS ANGELES TIMES, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, or DENVER POST, headlines like "Student Writing is Sinking," "It's High Time to Hold Schools Accountable," "Schools Fail the Test," "School Reform," "Teacher Hails Return of Basics," "20 Per Cent in U.S. May Be Functionally Incompetent," "Call Back Teachers of Latin and Greek," "When Education Was Indeed Basic, It Turned Out Some Good Products," "High School Teachers Up Against It After Students Miss Fundamentals," "Scottsdale School Official Proposes Return to Basics," "Bad English Simply Fault of Ill-Equipped Teachers," "Shape Up, Teachers!" "School Reform Has Priority," "Liberals Defend Open Classes Against Back-to-the-Basics Forces," "Progressives Have Failed," and "College Entrance Test Scores Drop Sharply," all intended to drive home one simple (or simplistic) point--that schools are not what they used to be, that schools are failing where they once admirably succeeded. The screaming NEWSWEEK article "Why Johnny Can't Write" (Dec. 18, 1975, pp. 58-62, 65) makes some valid points, but it is not much more than an up-dating of the first article in the first issue of the first year of the ENGLISH JOURNAL. Edwin M. Hopkins answers his own question-title, "Can Good Composition Teaching Be Done Under Present Conditions?" (Jan. 1912, pp. 1-8) with his entire first paragraph which is simply, "No." The basics are nothing new, but they are always worth worrying about. That's what the writers in this issue do, generally, and a number offer specific suggestions on what we can do/might do/should do to alter present conditions and restore/reassess the basics in terms of English teaching. Some of the articles are general comments or assessments or attacks or defenses of the "basics" in English teaching, but a number are specific discussions of "basics" in teaching composition or reading or language or non-print media or the humanities. Many writers here discuss/attack the whole notion of the "basics" or the nebulous quality of that word which has so many meanings to so many people. It could be argued that no word has succeeded so well in obfuscating issues as the word "basics" which is frequently used to hide meaning (or so it seems to some readers) rather than clarify a point about the nature of education or the need of schools. Charles Weingartner's article which is near the end of this issue might be an excellent place to begin reading.

SCISAB SPELLED BACKWARDS IS BASICS!

Allan E. Dittmer, University of Nebraska

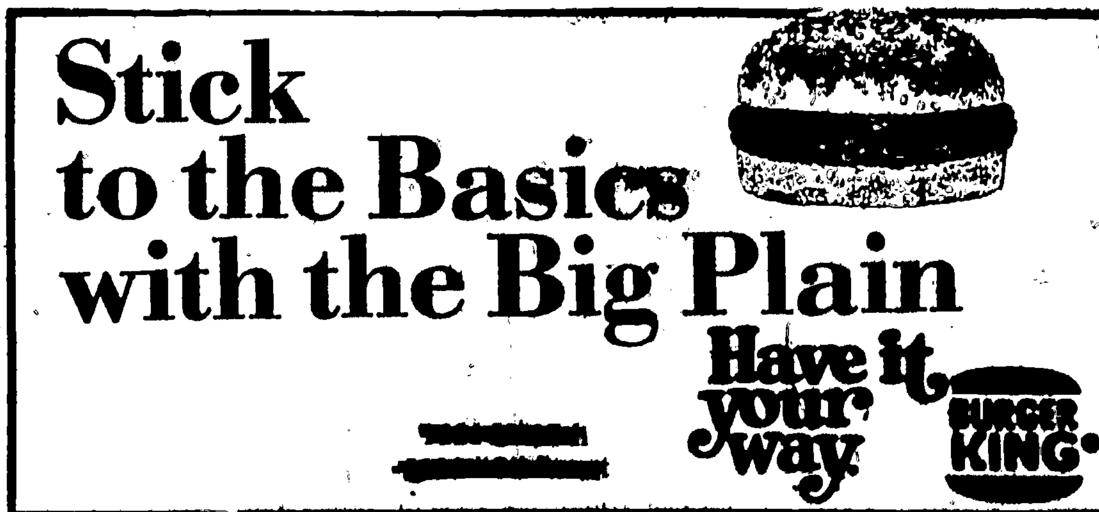
So here we are again in the trenches--those vaguely familiar ditches we've dug so many times before, just behind the shabby line of defenses we always hastily repair to ward off that worrysome, enigmatic enemy. In the words of Margot Hentoff in her May 12, 1975 NEWSWEEK article entitled,"The Ungreening of Our Children," we are once again reinforcing our ". . . institutional Maginot Line. . ." which she says is ". . . perfectly equipped to deal with the past." And what is this retrenchment I'm referring to? Perhaps a few exerpts from the mass media will help to illustrate what I'm talking about.

CHURCHES TURNING BACK TO BASICS
(c) 1975 New York Times News Service

A decade ago, many liberal Protestant denominations were reeling under the impact of the God-is-dead movement, theologies that were triumphantly secular, and a flurry of social activism.

One explanation for this search for roots is the reaction to the turbulance of the last decade. "There was a profound dissatisfaction with the theologies of the mid-1960's such as the God-is-dead or liberation theology that turned people off and scared them. . . These fads came and went quickly because they didn't get hold of the issues the church cared about.

Or take this example from a recent hamburger ad:



Now if the notion of a national rush back to the womb is as pervasive as these two extremely different examples suggest (and I could cite many more), then it should come as no surprise that the movement is equally as strong in education.

McGUFFEY READERS ON COMEBACK TRAIL
(c) New York Times

Los Angeles--More than 100 years after his death, and almost 150 years after the publication of his first reader for school children, the works of William Holmes McGuffey are showing signs of a comeback.

The revival, limited to a few private and parochial schools, is rooted largely in the current "back to basics" in education.

The children who studied the McGuffey texts were introduced to a moralistic world where individual enterprise was expected, self-indulgence frowned upon and promptness, kindness and honesty rewarded. . .

Perhaps the basics push is even stronger in education than in other social institutions because of the often misplaced belief that schools should be the guardian and transmitter of the prevailing values of the culture, a belief often put into practice by protecting the status quo and resisting change at all costs, and transmitting one set of rigidly defined beliefs.

Recently, a generalist college supervisor of student teachers, who himself hadn't been in a public school classroom for fifteen years, and at that had had only one year of classroom teaching, advised a young idealistic, long-haired and bearded student teacher in English that his appearance might hinder his effectiveness with the students, when indeed the opposite would be quite the case. The supervisor's brush cut, white patent shoes, white shirt and narrow tie and evangelistic intoning would only carry him as far as the front door of most public schools today.

Unfortunately math and English have been the focus of the basics advocates because of the subjects' earlier prominence as the "three R's," and also because of the dismal statistics the testing people can dredge up to show that the nation's young are backsliding toward the precipice of illiteracy, if not downright idiocy. Not only can't Johnny read, he can't add or cipher as some put it, he can't speak, he can't write, he can't spell. He can't reason logically, he can't follow directions, he can't tie his shoes or cut with scissors on a dotted line, and on and on. But rest assured few of the basics advocates are worried about whether or not Johnny can spot a phony politician when he sees one, or live in peace with his universe and fellow man, or speak plainly without trying to hide his real purposes, or understand the impact that advertising and the mass media are having on him, or confront his own finiteness and fallibility, or develop a sense of the past and future, or consider the values and cultures of others, or look at the same situations differently, or think on his own and dare to be different. No, their overriding concerns are always with the safe, the sure, and most certainly inconsequential aspects of matters barely related to life or living. In Shel Silverstein's delightful anthology of poems entitled, WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS, there is a poem called "Chester," which states this notion very well:

CHESTER

Chester come to school and said,
"Durn, I growed another head."
Teacher said, "It's time you knowed
The word is 'grew' instead of 'growed.'"

One major flaw in the logic of the basics advocates is the unfounded assumption so consistently shown in research findings to be false or highly tenuous at best, that there are certain identifiable tenets which must precede certain others and be mastered before a person can go on to learn anything else. Perhaps that scheme did seem to fit a more fragmented, linear and sequential world of the past, but it hardly conforms to the fast-paced, instantaneous, technological world of the present, and it is even less suited to the future. Marshall McLuhan has said, "The past went that-a-way. When faced with a totally new situation, we tend always to attach ourselves to the objects, to the flavor of the most recent past. We look at the present through a rear view mirror. We march backwards into the future. Suburbia lives imaginatively in Bonanza-Land."

An educational system operating on the premise of the basics advocates, becomes regressive, socially debilitating, and self-destructive; it uses old ideas to approach new problems, it becomes education for the past not the future, it shuns risktaking and openness, and in the end produces a small elite of believing followers, each a carbon copy of the other; the types who will faithfully perpetuate bureaucratic behavior and push for larger and more efficient social, educational, religious, and political institutions--all geared to maintain the status quo.

What "bits" of information or isolated knowledge are needed before one can proceed to the next "bits?" Indeed, can knowledge be classified or broken down into "bits," and can the order in which these "bits" are to be ingested be determined? It seems to me that these questions are absurd, especially the further we move away from paper theories or college lecture notes and observe the complex intellectual Gestalt of a living, breathing human being. Take for example McLuhan's reflections on the education of Michael Faraday.

> 'My education was of the most ordinary description, consisting of little more than the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic at a common day school. My hours out of school were passed at home and in the streets.'
>
> Michael Faraday, who had little mathematics and no formal schooling beyond the primary grades, is celebrated as an experimenter who discovered the induction of electricity. He was one of the great founders of modern physics. It is generally acknowledged that Faraday's ignorance of mathematics contributed to his inspiration, that it compelled him to develop a simple, nonmathematical concept when he looked for an explanation of his electrical and magnetic phenomena. Faraday had two qualities that more than made up for his lack of education: fantastic intuition and independence and originality of mind.

Is it possible that education, especially education imposed as bits of trivia assumed to be those all students must know, can get in the way? J. Robert Oppenheimer, one of the original group of pioneer scientists in atomic energy once said:

> There are some children playing in the street who could solve some of my top problems in physics, because they have modes of sensory perception that I lost long ago.

How many times have those modes of sensory perception been stunted or completely destroyed by good intentioned teachers spending endless hours drilling the "basics" into their pupils? By the teaching of banal usage drills and parts of speech, how many have been turned away from writing? By scanning lines of uninteresting poetry and identifying iambs and tetrameters, how many have turned away from poetry? By spending endless hours on phonics drills and word attack skills and the elaborately specified objectives of this approach or that, how many have been turned away from reading? At a time in the history of mankind when it seems even more important than ever for our educational establishment to respond to the challenges of the present and future, we are bogged down in behavioral objectives, competency based education, systems strategies, learning disabilities and reading thrusts, this fad and that push, all gimmicks of an establishment unwilling to risk a step into the present. Our schools are still largely segregated, unequal, and catering to a relatively small group of white middle class citizens who, since they pay for those schools, want them kept that way. The findings of the national assessment research are an unremitting theme without variations; blacks and the poor generally score lower; the poorer geographic areas of the country generally score lower, and overall, only a relatively small number of the total school population score up to the norms. Unfortunately it is these very findings that the basics advocates use to support their arguments. How many of them have sat in a large inner city school classroom and watched grammar and math and history being preached to a sea of disinterested faces, a phenomenon analogous to pumping blood into a corpse.

In the following excerpts from Marshall McLuhan, I find a variety of explicit and implicit clues as to the nature of the problem and the direction of the solution.

> The drop-out situation in our schools at present has only begun to develop. The young student today grows up in an electrically configured world. It is a world not of wheels but of circuits, not of fragments but of integral patterns. The student today lives mythically and in depth. At school, however, he encounters a situation organized by means of classified information. The subjects are unrelated. They are visually conceived in terms of a blueprint. The student can find no possible means of involvement for himself, nor can he discover how the educational scene relates to the "mythic" world of electronically processed

data and experience that he takes for granted. As one IBM executive puts it, 'My children have lived several lifetimes compared to their grandparents when they begin grade one.'

It is a matter of the greatest urgency that our educational institutions realize that we now have civil war among these environments created by media other than the printed word. The classroom is now in a vital struggle for survival with the immensely persuasive 'outside' world created by new informational media. Education must shift from instruction, from imposing of stencils, to discovery--to probing and exploration and to the recognition of the language of forms.

The young today reject goals. They want roles--R-O-L-E-S. That is, total involvement. They do not want fragmented, specialized goals or jobs.

We now experience simultaneously the dropout and the teach-in. The two forms are correlative. They belong together. The teach-in represents an attempt to shift education from instruction to discovery, from brainwashing students to brainwashing instructors. It is a big, dramatic reversal.

The dropout represents a rejection of nineteenth century technology as manifested in our educational establishments. The teach-in represents a creative effort, switching the educational process from package to discovery. As the audience becomes a participant in the total electric drama, the classroom can become a scene in which the audience performs an enormous amount of work.

The country has gone through much--Vietnam, the urban riots, Watergate, an energy crisis, and a severe inflation/depression. We reel from one shock wave to the next, and because the turbulance is so intense and because there seems to be no respite, we turn to the past, the "good old days," the tried and true values, in an attempt to find a quiet secure harbor in a stormy sea. But the lessons of great art and history tell us that hiding only forestalls the inevitable struggle of mankind with the difficult exigencies of living.

Another flaw in the thinking of the basics advocates is their almost religious faith in the power of content, especially that rigidly defined, vacuous content so depressingly reminiscent in the old grammar workbooks (currently making a comeback by the way) of a decade or so ago. This faith in content is usually accomplished by a total lack of concern for the individual. Courses such as "bonehead English," large classes where an instructor's lectures are monitored to the students on television sets, learning packets designed to keep a student "busy" (read quiet), and many more depersonalizing gimmicks to remove the self from learning are being hawked by the educational establishment. When I was a young boy growing up in the 40's, there was a belief, prevalent among most parents at that time, that if you didn't have a bowel movement at least once a day, you were sick. And because there are so many days in a week, and weeks in a month, and months in a year, how could one keep track of one's regularity? Obviously one couldn't, so there sprung up the practice of giving one an enema at least once a week, usually on Saturdays, just to make sure the "bad humors" weren't getting bottled up inside one's little body. This saturation method still prevails in so many aspects of our lives--in the indiscriminate use of herbicides and pesticides; in the assumption that a boy isn't a man until he's had a gun in his hands and killed an animal, the uni-sound and uni-sight of most radio and television programs. It is the enema-a-week syndrome that underlies the notion of the basics, a firm belief that saturation of the masses with a given content is necessary for a good and well balanced education. A recent longitudinal study of the effects of the new math on its recipients disclosed that they couldn't compute simple interest charges or figure out over-charges at the grocery store, or generally function at the "lowest" levels of "competence" with numbers. However, if one examines the premise on which the "new" (now old, I presume) math was based, i.e., the understanding of mathematical processes, then it is indeed ill suited to compete with the inexpensive pocket calculators which

not only add, divide, multiply and subtract instantaneously, but store facts in miniaturized memory banks and carry out complicated computations at the push of a button. One might even raise the question as to whether or not these miniature calculators have signalled the beginning of the end for math teachers in general. But lest the rest of us sit back smugly and nod in the affirmative, we should take note of the unbelievably rapid technological developments which themselves are chipping away at our little specialties, making what we do seem more redundant and unnecessary with each passing day. Rear view-mirrorism? Perhaps.

When Michael Lesy wrote WISCONSIN DEATH TRIP, he used a method of combining newspaper articles and photographs in order to allow a Gestalt to emerge which, although somewhat different in the perception of each reader, brings home powerfully his central thesis.

My central thesis has been that a return to some mythological set of basics is not only the wrong response to dealing with the problems and challenges of the present and future, but a response that will erode any progress we have made and even signal the end of mass public education as we have known it. In the last year we have seen the publication of three popular books on language: METATALK: A GUIDE TO HIDDEN MEANINGS IN CONVERSATION by Gerard I. Nierenberg and Henry Calero; WORD PLAY: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PEOPLE TALK by Peter Farb; and STRICTLY SPEAKING: WILL AMERICA BE THE DEATH OF ENGLISH? by Edwin Newman; three books which deal with the erosion of language as a means of effective, clear communication. And still the pressure exists to return to the teaching of usage and grammar drills. The following are just a sample of recent news items which although excerpted, give some hint of the state of education in the 70's.

STUDY FINDS TWO MILLION CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF EDUCATION

An 18-month study by Children's Defense Fund (CDF) of the Washington Research Project concludes that public schools have pushed out or systematically excluded more than two million children who should be enrolled in classes. . . Nationwide, according to the report, minority children are pushed or dropped out far in excess of the percentage of school enrollment they represent.

'We have found that if a child is not white, or is white but not middle class, does not speak English, is poor, needs special help with seeing, hearing, walking, reading, learning, adjusting, growing up, is pregnant or married at age 15, is not smart enough or is too smart, then in too many places, school officials decide school is not the place for that child. . .'

'. . . This is not just a problem of Black or Spanish children. Three-quarters of all children out of school are white. . . This is an institutional failure.'

AN EXERCISE IN EDUCATIONAL FLIM-FLAM

People are more impressed by buildup than by substance. So it seems in the academic arena.

To prove that point, three southern California medical educators. . . devised a hoax. They hired a professional actor, dressed him up with a fictitious 'curriculum vitae,' and presented him to lecture to three groups of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers. The actor's subject was announced as 'mathematical game theory as applied to physical education.' He was billed as 'Dr. Myron L. Fox of the Albert Einstein University.'

Dr. Fox lectured 55 educators, employing academic jargon and double-talk, citing one irrelevant, conflicting and meaningless statement after another. In his question-and-answer period he was even more contradictory and meaningless.

When his lecture was finished, a satisfaction questionnaire was distributed to the audience, whose members were asked to respond anonymously to Dr. Fox's talk.

ERIC

Herewith some of their comments: 'Excellent presentation, enjoyed listening. Has warm manner. Good flow, seems enthusiastic. . .Lively examples. . .extremely articulate. . .too intellectual.'

Not one of the educators realized that their authoritative lecturer was a 'phony.' Virtually all were convinced they had learned something.

What this means, say the three pranksters who originated the experiment, is that student satisfaction with learning may represent little more than the illusion of having learned.

SCHOOLCHILDREN GET SPANKINGS

Sacramento, Calif. (AP)--One of every 100 public schoolchildren in California received a spanking during the last school year, says the first statewide study of corporal punishment in schools.

There were 46,022 spankings, almost all to boys for California's 4 million children in kindergarten through high school, says the report prepared by the State Education Department.

The spankings prompted 535 parental complaints to the school administration, 63 complaints to school boards and seven lawsuits.

ANYTHING FOR A GRADE

In the fall quarter at the University of Denver, Michael Rock. . .strode into his Principles of Economics class, made a surprise announcement. 'You people have won,' he declared. 'I'm going to sell grades. Grades will go to the highest bidder. If you people are so happy with the free market process, why don't we just let the market system dictate who gets what?'

Another professor was called in to auction off the grades without prejudice. While several students objected to the auction. . .approximately 90% of the class participated. Professor Rock collected almost $2000 averaging $85 for an A in his course, $55 for a B, $35 for a C. Rock accepted promissory notes from most of the students, but one insisted upon giving him $80 in cash. Another student, observing the absence of several friends who were obviously cutting class, bought up extra C's and D's, tried to make a few bucks by advertising them in the school paper.

To the shock of many students who'd ceased studying for their class final and burned their term papers, Rock announced on the last day of class that his auction was a hoax.

Wailed one incredulous student: 'That can't be. You're an authority figure. We've all accepted you as an authority and what you told us as true."

Rock says now that he wishes he hadn't done it. Why then did he conduct his phony auction? Largely, he explains, because he was annoyed at the uncritical acceptance of the free enterprise system by his students and some of the comments they had written on their examinations.

VD "EPIDEMIC"

The epidemic of veneral disease in the U.S. has medical authorities and school officials worried. Reported cases of gonorrhea alone are rising at a rate of 90,000 a year, with the total expected to cross the million mark this year. This is the highest incidence since the U.S. Public Health Service began keeping records in 1919. Health officials say that many cases go unreported, estimate the actual number of current gonorrhea victims in the U.S. at 2.5 million. Most of these are believed to be teenagers or young people in their early 20's.

A NATION OF SHEEP?

An article about the sheep-like behavior of urban Americans--especially younger ones--toward outrageous behavior directed at them has attracted national attention. It should.

Writing in PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, Dr. Thomas Moriarty, a New York University faculty member, described experiments deliberately designed to see how people would react to insulting or offensive conduct.

Overwhelmingly, those tested by horrendously loud music or requests to search themselves for items claimed lost by others did not object or passively drew into their own shell, hunkering down into individual noninvolvement.

UNHAPPY WORKERS

How happy are most Americans in their work? Not very, reports Studs Terkel, author of a forthcoming book on the subject, WORKING: PEOPLE TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY FEEL ABOUT WHAT THEY DO.

Of the 85 million white- and blue-collar workers in this country, most of them hold jobs which make them sick--so contends Terkel.

Workers suffer from headaches, backaches, ulcers, alcoholism, drug addiction, and even nervous breakdowns, all because they find their work unsatisfying and consider it 'another form of violence.'

After three years of research, Terkel reports that most of the people he interviewed found their work monotonous or painful.

Although occupational discontent is widespread, Terkel explains that workers fear most the loss of their jobs, of not being needed, of being easily replaced, of being held small value by the system, of being compelled to retire.

What they crave is meaningful work, work which will accord them respect, recognition, pride in a job well done.

When such satisfactions are placed beyond their grasp, their frustration mounts and they retaliate with sabotage, absenteeism, and substandard production.

INDIAN DROPOUTS

The dropout rate for American Indian children is twice the national average.

Those who remain in school are from one to three years behind white students. Only 1% of Indian children have Indian teachers.

One-fourth of secondary teachers 'by their own admission' do not want to teach Indian children.

Eighteen percent of Indian high school graduates enroll in postsecondary education, compared to about 50% for the population as a whole. Only 3% ever graduate from college.

One in five Indians have less than five years of schooling.

Calling the situation 'a national tragedy,' South Dakota Sioux Indian Dorrance D. Steele added that the historic role of Indian education in the past 'was to change and assimilate and deculturalize him, not to educate him.'

CRIME IN OUR SCHOOLS

The level of violence and vandalism in the nation's public elementary and secondary schools continues to increase and horrify. The level has become so high, particularly in urban areas, that in many cases the schools can no longer carry out their primary function--to educate.

Sen. Birch Bayh (D., Ind.) recently released a preliminary subcommittee report on what is happening inside America's schools. It's called, "Our Nation's Schools--A Report Card: 'A' in School Violence and Vandalism." It's a shocker.

Drug addiction, rape, robbery, gang violence, alcoholism--it reads, as Bayh suggests, 'like a casualty list from a war zone or a vice squad annual report.'

The survey shows that each year there are 70,000 serious physical assaults on teachers. In 1973 there were hundreds of thousands of such assaults on students, 100 of whom were murdered, and this in only 757 school districts surveyed.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

In one urban school district 250 weapons were confiscated, and in others, suburban as well as urban, there were prostitution, blackmail, and drug rings, all thriving.

Between 1970 and 1973 this is what the school crime rate looked like:

Homicides increased by 18.5%
Rapes and attempted rapes--40.1%
Robberies--36.7%
Assaults on teachers--77.4%
Assaults on students--85.3%
Weapons confiscated by school authorities--54.4%
Drug and alcohol offenses on school property--37.5%

The major victims of school crime are not the teachers, thousands of whom work in constant fear, but the students who attend large urban secondary schools.

While most sociologists acknowledge the 'substantial effect general societal conditions have on the conduct of school behavior,' no one knows for sure who or what is responsible for the mounting wave of violence in high schools. Some authorities attribute it to frustration, unwarranted suspension, truancy, gangs, drugs, and personal hopelessness.

BABYSITTING WAGES

A Fauquier County (Va.) teacher overheard some parents saying elementary school teachers are nothing more than overpaid babysitters and teachers ought to be paid babysitting wages. So Mrs. William Bloomer, who has taught at Northwestern Elementary School for two years, sat down and did some calculations: A child is in school about 25 hours per week for about 40 weeks a year, for a total of 1,400 hours per year. Figuring a babysitter gets paid 50 cents per hour, that comes to $700 per year for one child. But a teacher has a minimum class of 25 children, and at $700 per child she would make $17,500 a year at babysitting wages. Mrs. Bloomer said she would settle for babysitting wages, since she is only making $8,400 a year.

Well, I can see by the red in your eyes, you've had enough. It was not my intention by this little montage to suggest that education is in a shambles and that American society is teetering on the brink of total collapse, although I am sure there are those who would get that message from these clippings; I have merely tried to show that we face some new and different challenges which cannot be met by stepping backward into the basics. Nevertheless, there we are again, watching that old familiar pendulum swinging back again, as it has for so many millennia before. Maybe just once in the history of human affairs, we will stop tending to the pendulum and realize it is the clock that needs repairing.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

Worry about the future of the humanities has been with us ever since the humanities first appeared in the high school and college curricula, but the worry persists. "Reports from some liberal arts institutions point to a decline in enrollment in humanities divisions (history, literature, philosophy and fine arts, studied not for information's sake but toward the end of deepening and refining responsiveness to life). There are stirrings of concern--no broad-scale inquiries launched as yet--among leaders of learned associations and experts on trends in graduate education about whether the quality of arts and humanities students has fallen off. Some hold that the best students feel that being where the action is in the near future can only mean being in the nonteaching professions or the sciences. One reason for the negative self-images is the incompatibility between humanistic studies and the spirit of the present. Most disciplines in humanities are based on The Word--on the print culture. But in contemporary culture the skills of reading and writing are losing centrality. . ." (Benjamin DeMott, "Are the Humanities Really Out of Style?" NY TIMES, "The Week in Review" Section, Oct. 26, 1975, p. 9)

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

OF REVELANCE (sic) AND THE BASICS

Bertrand Evans, Brookings, Oregon, formerly at University of California, Berkeley
Author of DIALOGUES ON THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE and HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS

What is Basic, said jesting Sir Francis, and would not stay for an answer.

On that hint, I take the invitation to write on "the basics" to be in fact an invitation to say all that I ever wanted to say about education and was afraid to say. But incidentally I shall have some words to say on behalf of the basics even though I have never been committed to them in a narrow sense; the best single line about education that I have ever read or heard spoken was uttered many years ago by a forgotten speaker who remarked that if you have ever passed a wintry night on a bed whose covers extend only to the edge, you learned that it's the part that hangs over the edges that keeps you warm. The line expresses my whole educational philosophy, and I wish I could claim to have invented it.

When I was one and twenty, and already half through my first year of high school teaching, I wrote an article called "Minimum Essentials in English." It was published in the official journal of education of the state in which I was teaching, and it promptly brought me three offers to teach in districts much larger than that by which I was employed.

Now I am two and twenty, and I have little doubt that were I to submit the same essay it would bounce harder than a bad check; or, if by some fluke it did get into print, it would get me summarily fired and drummed out of the profession.

My essay concerned only writing, not reading, and what I said in it was that English teachers should make a serious and steady effort to see that in their own classes and schools certain fundamental standards of expression were attained and maintained. I spelled these out fairly fully in terms of grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, word usage. I insisted that, whatever the degree of universal attainment actually turn out to be, still the teacher's goal should be set high: students should be made capable of keeping the agreement of subject and verb straight, their modifying phrases and clauses clearly attached to the right words, their parallel elements parallel, their pronoun numbers, persons, and cases in proper order, their semicolons, colons, commas, and periods where respectable modern publications place them, their words spelled as they are in a standard dictionary. And a good deal more.

I also adumbrated in some detail the kinds of instruction needed to accomplish these ends: elements of knowledge of the sentence, parts of speech, principles of modification, grammatical usages in terms of subject, object, predicate nominative; the use of drills by which knowledge is transformed into skills; the steady practice of writing by which skills are consolidated and perfected. Some notion of the degree to which I expected mastery of grammatical principles can be expressed by means of a single example: I expected teachers to prepare their students to distinguish unerringly the cases of the subject of an infinitive, the direct object of an infinitive, the predicate nominative of an infinitive without a subject, and the predicate nominative of an infinitive with a subject.

As I said, publication of my essay in an official journal of education resulted in my being offered jobs in three larger schools--as chairman of the English department, no less. But, better than all that, my own superintendent empowered me to implement my program in our school. And, believe me, I did just that.

Actually, I published that essay in 1936, forty years ago. And where are we now? In the interim have succeeded not only the progressive educationists (who were

already well established in the 1930s), but the linguisticists, the creativists, and, most recently, the astonishing relevantists. But, in fact, the succession has been cumulative: none of the maladies was terminal to itself, and today we inherit them all. The progressive educationists believed in many things, but I believe that above all they believed in activity--in learning by doing, or perhaps merely doing for doing's sake. The linguisticists denounced everything prescriptive and contented themselves with only observing and describing the language as she is spoke; I remember vividly one sentence uttered furiously by a distinguished black principal in the San Francisco area in 1960: "No matter what 'expert' tells me to 'leave their language alone,' I refuse to graduate students from high school who say 'I is'!" The creativists, latter-day versions of the free expressionists who began to flower in the thirties, abjure discipline in any form, insist on letting language run wild, all sails and no anchor, and seem happiest when students are engaged in merely random and mindless activity.

But the chief inheritors of all these excesses are today's relevantists, whose shallowly conceived doctrines have dominated American public school education and intimidated all opposition since about 1965. I first sensed that the jig was up when, in that year, as the English major adviser for prospective teachers at Berkeley, I was visited in my office by a pair of irate fifth-year teacher-trainees who demanded that I waive the requirement and get them out of a novel course in which the professor had just assigned Jane Austen's EMMA. Their gist, which was buttressed with sundry phrases that have since become the jargon of relevantists everywhere--but which were then, to me, quite new and unexpected--was that neither Jane Austen nor any other 18th century author was relevant to them, their education, their lives, or their chosen profession. Though I had long been familiar with the professional educationists' jargon of "felt needs" and all that, I was taken aback by the thought that two bona fide English majors, graduates of a great university, just ready to start teaching, should seemingly have swallowed a philosophy that, if followed to its ultimate implication, would truly cut off the covers at the edge of the bed.

Soon after this rude introduction to the relevantist syndrome, I began, of course, to hear much more about it from every corner of the country, and about the sorts of persons involved in education who became its active pushers. And pushers they have been and yet are, more avid than the "activities" pushers in the thirties, just as zealous and eager as the more frenzied structure hucksters of the linguistic fringe who rode their thing into the ground in the early sixties. Being a Shakespearean by trade, and thinking of what this new breed was doing to education in America, I found myself repeatedly muttering my private paraphrase of Gertrude's great line in HAMLET, "O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!"

I believe that, historically, the rage of relevantism (or relevantitis, or relevantosis) reached its zenith--if "zenith" is the proper word for something so wholly negative--in about 1970. It was throughout that year that a teacher friend of mine, who was the English coordinator for a very large Bay Area school district, received from the administrator who coordinated all the coordinators of the various subject areas a daily succession of memos urging that the prime requisite of new programs being shaped in English--and in social studies, languages, math, and the rest--was "revelance." So every memo spelled it. "In planning your activities," he wrote, preparing to dangle his modifier, "every activity is to be demonstrably revelant."

I do not mean to suggest that every relevance pusher in the country during the past fifteen years is capable of the same hideous metathesis; but I believe that the example tells much in small space.

Surely it is nothing if not ironic that, during these years, the relevantists should have proved to be the archest, if not the final, opponents of "the Basics."

In my own best sense of both terms, basic and relevant are blood brothers; what is truly basic is, per se, relevant in the highest degree, purely relevant. But during recent years school people appear to have adopted just the opposite view, seeing the basic and the relevant as irreconcilable extremes. It is no doubt the sense of relevance that has suffered the more drastic pejoration during this period of change. "Relevant" programs have become identified with the immediate, the "now," the impromptu. "Relevant" education is impatient education: its enthusiasts concern themselves not with the central but with the peripheral, not with principle but with what, for lack of a more graceful term, I shall call "end-things." They are less interested, for example, in teaching children to read as a basic skill, than in teaching them to read road signs. They are concerned, let us say, with certain, necessarily sporadic, end results of education rather than with the core to which all the peripheral items are ultimately attached; not with the hub, the nave, or even with the radiating spokes of the wheel, but with the rim. They seek to educate by going directly to the rim.

Perhaps I can clarify the point by shifting away momentarily from "relevant" and back to "basic." The educational emphasis that I have just identified with the relevantists appears to me to contradict both senses that I have of "basic." The first sense, I believe, is the usual one; it pertains simply to those skills and elements of knowledge which underlie and make further learning possible. The other sense I have of "basic" is that which we mean when we speak of scientific research as "basic" as opposed to "applied." Basic scientific research directs itself to understanding of all sorts of phenomena, without reference to any specific application of whatever knowledge may be acquired by the research. Applied research, in contrast, directs itself toward specific ends--the development of hens that will lay larger eggs, the creation of television tubes that will differentiate colors more precisely. Much purely basic scientific research never leads to any practical application; on the other hand, without basic research no applied research could long continue productive. I believe that the concern of relevantists with "end-things" is analogous to the concern of applied scientists with application; and I believe that whereas applied science proceeding with no grounding in basic scientific research would soon simply run out of steam, "applied education"--i.e., activity programs aimed directly at specific "end-things"--will soon and inevitably lead us all to cultural barbarism and disaster. If I may judge by repeatedly published reports of many kinds and levels on the conditions in American schools today, I must conclude that we are half way there already.

It is only mildly cheering that we read occasionally of educational efforts to stem the tide, block the avalanche, turn things around. Evidently a considerable number of school districts, under pressure from parents, provide a classroom or two--or, in some instances, even one entire school out of many in the district-- for "alternative" programs devoted to the traditional basics. We read, too, of occasional basics-oriented school administrators who have either reversed the direction of their programs entirely or, in rarer cases, actually never did switch away from the traditional emphases and values. And of course, anyone who can boast of a fairly wide acquaintance with classroom teachers can name many who have stood like rocks in the stream and have never given way to the passing flood. But the very term "alternative" betrays the harsh truth: instead of occupying the center of the main stream, the basics have been relegated to the position of the experimental and the eccentric, and are struggling at best to hold their own in little side-pools at the edge of the main stream.

Alas, not even all administrators who sturdily profess an allegiance to the basics are quite clear on the meaning of the term; in response to public pressure a superintendent of schools recently published his list of five basic skills to which his administration is committed: "the ability to read, comprehend, and respond to regulations and directions; the ability to locate and use information; the development of

speaking, listening, and writing skills needed on the job; an ability to maintain personal and household records; the ability to use basic math skills to solve everyday problems." The underlinings are mine, and these phrases seem to me to betray the fact that the superintendent's real commitment is not to basics at all, but to what I have called, with no flattering intent, "end-things."

And, alas, all of the teachers of my acquaintance who have never forsaken a genuine commitment to the basics, though they are numerous, are also aging; their ranks are thinned yearly by retirement--or by harried resignation. I truly cannot entertain much expectation that very many young teachers who have come through colleges and universities during the past ten to fifteen years have been equipped either psychologically or educationally to make the basics their center. Perhaps I have not yet recovered an even keel from the experience of those prospective English teachers who spurned Jane Austen as irrelevant to their education, their profession, and their lives (their life-styles, I believe they said), but I believe that the great majority of young English teachers have imbibed a narrow and shallow concept of relevance and that they are quite willing to surrender--they, of all people!--to what T.S. Eliot much earlier in this century called "the stranglehold of the present on the mind."

If we cannot expect a concerted effort by teachers and administrators to break this stranglehold, neither can we expect it, heaven knows, from the politicians, the general public, or, alas, the children themselves, the beneficiaries for whom, presumably, all that is done is done. The politicians have long since adopted as their cliche the empty term "quality education," which means nothing to them except lavishing more and more state and federal funds upon the very sorts of "innovative" programs that have brought education to its present state. The general public rages from time to time, fires superintendents, recalls board members, refuses to pass levies--but always ends by hiring, at great expense, outside consultants who have made a name for themselves by advocating the very vices that the public would like to see thrown out. And as for the children, they have not been brought up to put up for one moment with one of the truly basic conditions of education that might help us to salvage what we have lost and that was succinctly stated by Hutchins more than forty years ago: "Education is a serious business for serious people. It involves hard work, and hard work is sometimes disagreeable." How you gonna keep them down on the farm after they've seen TV?

Hutchins' thin volume, EDUCATION FOR FREEDOM (1943), has been a neglected book for too many years; so has the Harvard Report on GENERAL EDUCATION IN A FREE SOCIETY (1945), my library copy of which had not been checked out since 1963, but I believe that its central idea, expressed by the homely phrase "common learnings," has uncommon relevance for today. I add to these, as being among the books that, if I were king, I would make required reading for everyone involved with any level of education today, Sir Richard Livingstone's ON EDUCATION. And I do not hesitate to add to my prescribed list a book that is not directly about but enormously illuminates the quintessential tasks of education, Arnold's CULTURE AND ANARCHY, a book that today's relevantists, if they knew of it, would unquestionably vote the least "revelant" volume in print. I confess that I am a little sore on this last recommendation; the reviewer for the NCTE, deploring the lack of innovativeness and general backwardness of one of my own books on teaching English, remarked that I never got any farther than Matthew Arnold. 'Swounds! I should get so far!

I regret ending on a note of gloom and doom; but I have no panacea to recommend, and I do not honestly see how public school education is to be turned around, or how we are going to get--not back, or down--but up to "the basics." Sunk in a potful of eroded values and clutching vainly at all the "instructional materials" and other debris tossed us by the ubiquitous, eager relevantists, we seemingly have no way to pull ourselves up but by our own bootstraps, and even our prospects that way do not look auspicious. No bootstraps. No boots.

THE INDIFFERENT BELL:
A SHORT DIATRIBE AGAINST TEACHING THE BASICS

G. Lynn Nelson, Arizona State University

In his chapter "On Becoming" in SOUL ON ICE, Eldridge Cleaver states, "That is why I started to write. To save myself." And Cleaver writes very well while he is saving himself. And he didn't learn to write in one of our high schools from one of us English teachers either. He learned to write in Folsom Prison. A lot of good writers are coming out of our prisons these days -- and it ain't because the guards are teaching "the basics." Rather, I suspect, it's because more and more prisoners are discovering that they are people and that they have something to say. Once they make that discovery, they learn the basics.

And that's my premise: that the basics are a means and not an end in themselves and that they must be treated as such. Now that's not very revolutionary; in fact, it seems quite obvious. But in the classroom, we tend to forget. We tend to forget that there is no meaningful nor effective way to teach the basics directly; they can only be taught indirectly (out of the corner of your eye, as Thoreau would say) -- as they arise out of the need and the desire to communicate a living idea to another living person. Teaching the basics directly is deadly stuff. The students may eventually learn the basics (the means) that way, but usually only at the terrible price of losing interest in the ends: real communication with real people. They can tell you where to put a comma, but their eyes are glazed and their words are dead. They've lost the relationship between that comma and "saving themselves."

But then this has been the general history of English classes in our public schools -- a history of turning "means" into meaningless ends, of emphasizing the "subject" at the expense of the subjected. For various reasons, administrative and personal, we have generally preferred to remain oblivious of the fact that to study language apart from the living beings who use it is rather like taking the snail out of its shell and studying only the shell: it might occasionally be mildly interesting, but it is in fact a dead thing -- its true purposes and its real values can no longer be appreciated.

Once, thinking about the sadness of what we do with the beautiful and awful intertwined threads of life and language in our institutional education, I scratched some words, trying somehow to capture it all in the image of a small boy on his way to school on an autumn morning:

> Along the road to the gray stone school,
> he found a ragged butterfly
> blazing out its life beside a pool
> of last night's autumn rain
> (the wind had brought a crimson leaf to lie
> beside the yellow butterfly);
> all this was wrapped with music in his mind --
> but then from the gray stone school
> the indifferent bell summoned him to find
> death of quite another kind.

There is death, and there is death. In our attempts to reduce language to the basics and life to a manageable, manipulable, and measurable package which will fit neatly into our gray stone schools, we have succeeded only in bringing death -- unnatural and unnecessary -- into our classrooms.

About a decade ago, the stench of that corpse in our classroom reached even our

own insensitive pedagogic noses,(our students had smelled it long before); and there was a great flurry to roll away the stone from the English classroom door and to resurrect our "subject." And so the past ten years have seen a literal parade of self-proclaimed rock-removers: modular scheduling, electives, learning packages, variable grouping, independent study, etc.

And then just the other day -- after all our frenetic rock pushing -- someone decided that such "liberalizing" of the curriculum was producing a society full of "functional illiterates" and that we had best get back to the basics and the good ol' curriculum right away and quit all this damn messing around with the way God meant things to be.

Well, we needn't be too upset about all this sudden screaming to retrench -- the trip back won't be all that far. Because we never really changed that much anyway: just the paper on the package, the color of the corpse. The body is still lying there. The changes were mostly superficial changes because few of them involved the revolutionary and revitalizing decision to treat language as a living thing to be used and not as a dead thing to be studied. And few of them involved recognition of the fact that our "subject" is not a subject at all and cannot be treated as such -- it is life itself in all its variability and ambiguity and complexity. And until we start acting upon such acknowledgements, it's all just games anyway. And the functional illiterates -- and worse, the psychological and spiritual illiterates -- will be forever with us.

In my own case, it wasn't until after several frustrating years in the classroom that I grew to realize that one of the major problems in teaching English is just that: that we feel compelled to "teach" it, to reduce it to basics. My five-year-old daughter is the latest one to convince me of the truth of that discovery. She is just now falling down the rabbit hole into the wonderful world of written language. She comes home from kindergarten, gets out her grubby tablet and her blue felt-tip, squashed-tip pen and makes endless columns of letters and words and non-words and asks endless questions like "How do you spell goldfish?" and "What does this say?" Her name -- and therefore her identity -- is more real and more important to her now that she can write it (and it turns up everywhere, including on cereal boxes and the walls of her bedroom). And she wants to know how to spell the names of her friends and her family and her kitten and her goldfish and how to spell the words for all other things that are important to her. At this point, her language growth is obviously developing in the natural way, from the inside out, rather than in the very unnatural way in which we try to make it develop in our schools when we try to teach the basics directly, when we try to teach language as a subject.

And the beauty of it is that for her all of this is not HOMEWORK. It is HOMEPLAY. It is natural and fun and exciting for her, and she need not be either threatened or cajoled into doing it. Indeed, the idea of somehow receiving an A or an F (or an apple or a whipping) for doing it or not doing it (or for the way in which she does it) would be as incomprehensible and ludicrous to her as it should be to us. But that is just where we end up when we teach the basics directly.

And so I shudder to think of what will happen to my daughter and her natural excitement about language and languaging when, with each succeeding year, her teachers find it more and more their "duty" to teach the basics directly rather than to allow her to discover them through her natural exploration of and use of language.

For kindergarten, I am convinced, is the only meaningful haven left in all of public education. The salvation of kindergarten is that, by and large, we do not feel that we have to take it intellectually seriously; therefore, we allow the children to function as whole people and not just as truncated intellects. We allow them to

respond with both the right and left halves of their cerebrum, with their imagination and intuition as well as with their intellect. And it is the only remaining place in our institutional education where we allow their language to remain largely unseparated from their real lives outside the classroom. Thus, kindergarten is the last place left where the student can play "show and tell" -- can use language as a means to tell about something important to him rather than being taught language directly (and passively) as though it were some kind of an end (a dead end, in this case) within itself.

Because after kindergarten, we start teaching the basics. After kindergarten, we start turning language into artifact and English classrooms into museums and teachers into curators and students into stone.

- - - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"Little if any help in achieving the scholarly definition of a basic education contained in this book is going to come from advocates of a return to the 'good old days.' These people, a few of whom have access to audiences of substantial size, advocate a 'cure' which would destroy every worthwhile accomplishment in public education since the turn of the century. They talk about a return to the 'Three R's,' and they mean just that. Their 'good old days' were the times in the not too distant past when the average schoolteacher was considered well educated if he had finished high school and probably had never seen the inside of a college; when every child in a class had to proceed at exactly the same speed--and as a result schooling stopped at the fifth grade or less for the majority; and when most of those who were lucky enough to stay in school for eight years were taught reading, writing, a little simple arithmetic, and some spelling. This might have been a sufficient basic education for his subjects in the eyes of a feudal lord, but it is not adequate for those who would attempt to shape their own destinies." (Herbert M. Schwab, "The Prospects for Basic Education," in James D. Koerner, ed., THE CASE FOR BASIC EDUCATION: A PROGRAM OF AIMS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, Boston: Little, Brown, 1959, p. 245)

An attack on the writing proficiency of Los Angeles high school students led to a comment by UCLA English Professor Everett Jones. "I wish I had an answer. Teaching writing is painful. First, it is hard work. Second it is expensive. It is expensive because it takes time to correct papers and ideally that means fewer students per teacher, which costs more money." (Jack McCurdy, "L.A. Teachers Say It's True: Student Writing Is Sinking," LOS ANGELES TIMES, Dec. 16, 1974, pp. II-1, 2)

"Across the country, a new kind of 'new' school is beginning to appear: The old school. Begun two years ago in California, basics schools on fundamental schools now are offered as alternatives by a small but increasing number of public school districts. They exist because parents have asked for them.

The basics schools are just what they say they are: the three Rs, report cards and discipline. The emphasis is on teaching educational skills; homework is required and checked. They list achievement, manners and moral training among their goals. Honor rolls, dress codes and lining up quietly for class also are part of the system.

. . .

The basics schools may also signal a shift in parental attitudes about educational decisions. They exist, almost exclusively, because parents went to school boards and lobbied for them. At the very least, some parents are no longer content to leave the decisions entirely in the hands of school professionals." (Terry Ryan, "Parents Wanted, Received 'Old School' For Children," PHOENIX GAZETTE, Feb. 28, 1975, p. A-10)

ERIC

A FORWARD URGING:
DIAGNOSIS AND PRESCRIPTION IN BASIC SKILLS CLASSES

Janet N. Froemke, Glendale Educational Management System

"Back to the Basics" is a forceful and satisfying phrase. In the wake of the widespread and sometimes haphazard experiments of the Sixties, "Back to the Basics" suggests an essential--almost bi-centennial--democracy, for it speaks again of fundamental literacy for all. To a general public which has tired of experimentation and called for accountability, "Back to the Basics" rings with reassurance.

A danger is that parents and professionals alike may be deluded by the simple word-force of the phrase. We may all, in fact, move back to the basics when we ought to move ahead, for the words themselves are not calling us "back" to anything. They are a forward urging in basic skills instruction, and there is future-ness in the challenge to the schools.

THE LITERACY CHALLENGE TODAY

It is fruitless to argue whether basic English skills were once taught more effectively than they have been in the last few years. Instruction in the basics has always occurred within a greater social context. The context changes constantly; students change and are changed by their larger world, and the teaching task is, in some ways, forever new.

Today the task is defined chiefly by the sheer numbers of students enrolled--and the many who have been socially promoted--in the public schools. Teachers respond today to a wider range of learner needs, interests, abilities and backgrounds than ever before. In a tenth grade English class, it is not unusual to find a majority of the students reading below grade level--some at the second and third grade levels--and a few at the twelfth grade level or above. It is more difficult to assign grade level to writing achievement, but students in the same tenth grade class may range in ability from those who cannot write a single, coherent sentence to those who are capable of effective extended prose. Social promotion has been at work, and its confounding effect on curricula will be felt, for years.

Under such conditions the teaching task is mind-spinning to many teachers, and current cries for accountability have increased their frustration. To the teacher, the schools often seem to work at cross-purposes with themselves, broadening curricula and increasing class loads on the one hand, but calling, on the other, for instruction which is effectively personalized to meet the needs of students.

MANAGING INSTRUCTION TO MEET LEARNER NEEDS

Certainly, there is no single answer for teachers and students today. There are partial answers, however, and they seem persuasively apparent in the principles of modern classroom management. Especially in larger school districts, where differences among students are likely to be the greater, teaching and learning have come to require the material and theoretical support of instructional management systems.

Model districts in the western United States have shown significant jumps in math and reading achievement when diagnostic-prescriptive procedures were introduced to meet the needs of learners. The Jordan District in Salt Lake City and the Clovis District in Clovis, California, provide alternate management models, but both have documented learner gains in the basic skills through systematic diagnosis and carefully prescribed instruction. Several of the Phoenix Elementary schools have installed similar management systems, and implementers report positive effects on learners, both in the cognitive and affective domains.

ERIC

One teacher in the Phoenix Union High School District installed a diagnostic-prescriptive process in Title I English classes, buttressing it with careful classroom management. After the first semester of instruction last year, she reported that nearly all of her students showed gains of two to five grade levels on the language portions of the ITED. Students made their greatest cognitive gains in punctuation and usage, she said--but even more significant were the students' positive changes in attitude toward self and subject during that diagnostic-prescriptive cycle.

WHAT IS DIAGNOSTIC-PRESCRIPTIVE TEACHING?

As instructional management is styled differently in each of the model districts, so is the approach to instructional diagnosis and prescription. There is no single diagnostic and prescriptive system--nor should there be--but the concept can be clarified in terms of essential steps, however they might be styled.

Basically, diagnostic-prescriptive teaching is an instructional process which treats the student's identified needs within a limited content area. In the process, the teacher (1) measures student performance, (2) identifies student needs by comparing performance to an established standard, (3) interprets the conditions signalled by student performance, (4) prescribes specific experiences to help the student achieve desired learning, and (5) measures again for mastery. If the intended learning does not take place, the teacher (6) repeats the process, making a new prescription.

HOW IS DIAGNOSTIC-PRESCRIPTIVE TEACHING DIFFERENT FROM OTHER TEACHING DESIGNS?

Periodically, and with varying degrees of precision, all teachers diagnose and prescribe. Fewer teachers, however, have learned to view testing as an integral part of teaching. Too often the test is treated as a simple job requirement, more closely tied to record-keeping and reporting than it is to instructional planning.

By contrast, testing provides the teaching base in the diagnostic-prescriptive process, the purpose of which is the continual identification and elimination of learner needs. Diagnostic-prescriptive teaching should be understood as data-based instruction, and testing must be understood as a vital part of the process. In the diagnostic-prescriptive design, data collection and interpretation precede and follow instruction, and the sequence and pacing of learning experiences are determined chiefly by interim measures of student performance.

Again by contrast, data-based instruction is more nearly learner-centered than the teaching design which humanely seeks to avoid or minimize testing. Despite its systems-styled vocabulary, the diagnostic-prescriptive cycle places the needs of the learner above all else. Meaningful diagnosis calls for frequent personal exchange between teacher and student, and meaningful prescription calls for a teacher's sensitivity not only to the cognitive, but also to the affective needs of the learner. Moreover, it is only by assessing the needs of learners that instruction can be other than text-driven and teacher-centered or institutionally determined.

It is a fair description of the process to say simply that it is data-based and learner-centered, but two further descriptors help to distinguish the kind of teaching we call diagnostic and prescriptive.

Of greater cognitive importance is the fact that it is a skill-specific process, built on the understanding that knowledge and skills are accumulative. A student is able to know one thing because he already knows others; he is able to master one skill because he has already mastered others, and the reverse is true as well: frequently he is unable to master a skill because he has not mastered others.

In either event, it is important to recognize that every skill is a complex of implied sub-skills, and those must be broken out in performance terms for effective diagnosis and prescription. The diagnostic-prescriptive process is called skill-specific because it treats each identified sub-skill as an essential step toward a desired, but more general, learning outcome.

Finally, the process yields positive results in the affective domain because it is a system of alternatives for learners. Any classroom of thirty students can be used to demonstrate that there are many ways to learn. Learners have different strengths and styles, learning rates vary, and a teacher may well need different strategies to meet his students' range of needs. Thus, a diagnostic-prescriptive program relies on a wide variety of curatives, variously applied. To extend the medical metaphor, it is no more reasonable for a teacher to prescribe a single experience for all students than it would be for a physician to prescribe a single pharmacy item for every patient.

THE LIMITS OF THE REAL WORLD

The evidence seems sufficient to say that instruction in the basic skills can be significantly strengthened--if instructional management is both sturdy and flexible enough to meet the needs of individual learners. The diagnostic-prescriptive models work--even when they are dared by overwhelming class enrollments--but they can't be installed in a summer, or a year, or two years. Some districts have been at it for five years and more, and if they see value in their work to date, they still see time and training and earnest staff cooperation ahead. "Go," they say, "but go slowly. Build the appropriate managment in at every step, or the structure will never go up."

Here in Glendale, English teachers have invested more than two years' time and labor in a number of preliminary procedures, including the production of instructional "skillpacks" for classroom teachers. Referenced to a common skill structure, the Glendale skillpacks provide alternate diagnostic and mastery test forms, alternate learning activities for each sub-skill identified within a major skill, and mastery practice activities for each major skill sequence. Learning activities are designed to represent a range of learning styles and needs, and the skillpack itself is designed for flexible use, to facilitate effective diagnosis and prescription.

The skillpacks have been developed with creative care and precision. Glendale teachers have reported that the materials work well, and the skillpack process may serve as a model beginning for secondary schools. But it is important to note that materials of any kind are only a beginning, for no materials can effectively operationalize themselves.

As a district undertakes the design of diagnostic-prescriptive programs for the basic skills, there are helpful theories and fine models to be studied, and certain elements of instructional management can be readily transferred from existing systems. But the challenge is the greater to a beginning district as the staff discovers that it must, essentially, teach itself how to manage materials and instruction in new ways--within the unique constraints of its schools.

ERIC

GETTING BACK TO THE BASICS IN COMPOSITION

Frank J. D'Angelo, Arizona State University

The phrase getting back in my title suggests a going from one place to another, a journey, a trip, a flight. To many teachers in the middle and late 60's and early 70's, teaching composition and the language arts was like taking a trip. The use of the word trip to describe this venture into affective education is not accidental. Many teachers, seeking joy and ecstasy in their teaching, claimed that they experienced "highs" not unlike those experienced by young people using drugs to chemically alter their psyches so as to intensify perception.

For years, scholars, teachers, and social critics had been lamenting the heavy emphasis placed upon the cognitive domain in education and the relatively light emphasis placed upon the affective domain. Subsequent political, social, and educational events were to give teachers the opportunity to put these concerns into action. A disenchantment with American involvement in Vietnam, a new focus on the problems of racism and poverty, an attack against establishment schooling, the Dartmouth conference with its emphasis on personal experience, humanistic and existential psychotherapy with its emphasis on feelings and emotions, the new romanticism of free school advocates, and the counter-culture's celebration of naturalness, freedom, and spontaneity -- all of these seemingly unrelated things combined to make teachers and students believe that there was something wrong with an educational system that turned out mere automata and that produced citizens who on the one hand professed idealism and on the other allowed atrocities such as the war in Vietnam, racism, and poverty to exist.

Consequently, many teachers turned away from the basics as being something base and looked for a basis in the new romanticism of the 60's. In place of conceptual knowledge, they offered sensory experience. Instead of science, they celebrated the mystical and the mysterious. Instead of a detached objectivity, they sought involvement. In place of linearity, they advocated holism. Instead of nonutopian labor, they embraced ecstasy. Rather than preconceived ideas, they espoused exploration, discovery, creativity, play, nonintellectual sensing, dreams, fantasy, the unconsicous, and the stream of consciousness. They felt, along with Carl Rogers, that the teacher's primary job was to make it easier for students to communicate their feelings and their emotions. As Carl Rogers put it in ON BECOMING A PERSON (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961, p. 19):

> I have found it enriching to open channels whereby others can communicate their feelings, their private perceptual worlds to me. Because understanding is rewarding, I would like to reduce the barriers between others and me, so that they can, if they wish, reveal themselves more fully.

The writing which resulted was free of rules, prescriptions, and external constraints. If writing was to be meaningful to students, some teachers maintained, students must be allowed complete freedom to assert their selves, their world views. Writing should be "natural," "spontaneous," "instinctive." John Dixon, in an article entitled "Creative Expression in Great Britain" (ENGLISH JOURNAL, September, 1968, p. 797), writes of this approach:

> In such personal writing, as it has come to be called, the teacher is looking for an effort to achieve insight -- to brush aside the everpresent invitation to take the world as other people have found it, adopting ready made their terms and phrases (their image of us). Writing is a way of building a personal world and giving an individual rather than a stereotyped shape to our day-by-day experience. Personal writing has to take feeling as well as thought into account, attitudes as well as observations. Characteristically it uses prose as an undifferentiating matrix that blends discussion of ideas with the sense of felt experience. In its way, then, this is a starting point to which we continually recur.

For some teachers, the archetypal journey that many students took in search of the self was also a journey that they felt compelled to take as they searched their souls for their own feelings about Vietnam, drugs, sex, racism, and poverty. It is no wonder that many teachers veered from the dogmatism of traditional course instruction toward what seemed to them at the time a freedom from prescription and structure. So they turned toward the elective system, toward relevance, toward self-expression in writing, away from the survey in literature, away from prescribed patterns in writing, and away from "correct grammar." After all, it was hard to get a student who had politically or socially dropped out or who was turned on by drugs to tune in to anything that smacked of prescription or structure. The approach toward writing and English education at this time, then, was a necessary response to the political and social events of those tortuous, yet exhilarating years.

But this journey, like all journeys, had to have an ending. The aftermath of the civil rights movement and the war in Vietnam, the disillusionment over Watergate and the White House tapes, the political machinations of the CIA, the FBI, and the IRS, the oil crisis, inflation, joblessness, the state of the economy, crime in the streets, and white collar crimes such as price fixing and monopolistic practices were to bring many teachers (and students) back from their euphoric highs down to a bitter reality. To some critics of education, the lofty flights into the realms of ecstasy taken by some teachers was not the mind-expanding trip that many teachers had envisioned but rather a running away, an escape, from political and social realities. So when the popular press began to take up the cry that the schools had been derelict in their duties, that students could neither read nor write with any degree of proficiency, many teachers found themselves victims of cultural shock, or perhaps what Alvin Toffler has called "future shock." Who could have envisioned that the heady wine of the 60's would have turned into the sour vinegar of the mid 70's so quickly?

So now it's time to take stock. No one would want to go back to the dogmatism and arbitrary structures of much traditional schooling. Yet many are convinced that some sort of return to structure is necessary and that there should be a continuing search for new structures. Many teachers would not want to give up the gains made by emphasizing personal writing and self-expression. Yet many are convinced that because students can write in one mode, that doesn't necessarily mean that they can write in the other modes. To write effectively in modes such as exposition and persuasion, the student needs formal training.

If some teachers have built castles in the air in the 60's, it is now time to put foundations under them in the 70's. But building foundations is never as exciting as completing whole buildings. And to many teachers, there is something base about getting back to the basics. But that which is base is not necessarily lower or inferior in rank. It can be the principal component of something, the basic principle or principles to which we must ever and ever return.

What are these basics in writing to which many critics believe we must return? To the general public, to the popular press, to many members of the business community, and to some educators, getting back to the basics means getting back to spelling, punctuation, capitalization, penmanship, and "correct grammar." By correct grammar, they usually mean avoidance of sentence fragments, run-on sentences, dangling modifiers, incorrect verb tenses, and faulty reference of pronouns. These things are easy for critics to attack because they are the most visible in student writing. There is no doubt that writing which has an excess of mechanical and grammatical errors can be irritating, distracting, and lacking in coherence, as the following student paper clearly indicates:

MY ROOM IS AN EXTERNALIZATION OF MYSELF

My room reflects the ideas and life style which is so much apart of me. Music, clean and neatness, a time to think and study.

Music, I don't know what I would do without it. The reason I love music the way I do, is because I use to work in a electronic store. You, as the salesman had to convince that person he would like a stereo unit. Then, tell him how much better the MUSIC would sound on this new one rather than his own. That is one way I aquired a ear to music, being around it a lot.

Clean and neatness is another hang up which I follow. I can't stand being in a dirty place I use to live next door to some neighbors and their house looked like a PIG PEN. The bathroom was a disgrace. Cob webs in the corners, and dirt on the floor and tiles. The house had a particular oder. Things like this just stay in your mind. Especially since I was raised in a house where clean and neatness was a must.

Then the good old room reflects a big part of me as does a lot of other people. The Time you need to be alone to think. It might be a personal problem or trite thing. You know you can always depend on it. It will never leave you. You can always talk to it, and it won't get smart back, but just listen to you. Then your room is a study period. The only bad thing is if you're having a problem with your studies, it can't help you. If only your room could talk? Your room gives you all the peace and comfort you need.

In conclusion to my thesis, your room plays a big part of your life. You live study, listen to music and any other things you please. If someone took a survey, I wonder how many hours of your life you spend in your ROOM?

This student clearly needs work in the fundamentals of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and "correct grammar." But more importantly, he needs work in sentence and paragraph construction and in the basic principles of unity and coherence.

In direct antithesis to this paper is the paper that has a clearcut organizational pattern, a paper that is relatively free of mechanical and grammatical errors, but one which does not say very much:

HIDDEN REFERENCES TO DRUGS IN ROCK LYRICS

About five years ago "Puff the Magic Dragon" by Peter, Paul and Mary was released and it turned into one of the most popular hit songs of its time. Then Peter, Paul and Mary announced that if you looked closer at the lyrics you would find it is about smoking marijuana. Soon, other groups made songs with hidden meanings about drugs. The Beatles made "Yellow Submarine" which is about a trip on Yellow Methodrine. Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit" is all about pills and their affects. More and more groups started to sing songs about drugs. In fact, most modern groups write some songs about drugs.

One example of this is the Doors "Soft Parade". One part of the song goes like this:

> This is the trip
> The best part of the trip
> I really like it. Ahhh lights
> Pretty good, huh!
> I am proud to be part of
> this number!

The soft parade represents the movement toward drugs. It goes on to say that people ignore the soft parade and when they finally realize it is coming it will be too late.

Another example of songs with references to drugs is "Purple Haze" by Jimi Hendrix. The song starts like this:

> Purple haze all in my brain
> Seeing things that don't seem the same.
> I'm acting funny and I don't know why
> Excuse me while I kiss the sky.

This song refers to a trip on purple microdot of L.S.D. Many of Hendrix's songs were drug oriented.

Black Sabbath has many songs about drugs, although they deal with the harmful side of drugs. "Hand of Doom" is a story about a person becoming a heroin addict. The lyrics tell how this person became an addict, and they go on to show the deterioration of the addict's body and mind. Finally, the song tells of the end result of drugs; death. A couple of verses go like this:

Take it in your nose
You've joined the other fools
Turn to something new
Now it's killing you

Now you know the scene
Your skin starts turning green
Your eyes no longer see
Lifes realities

Grateful Dead wrote a song called "Casey Jones". It is about Casey Jones taking cocaine and his "trip" while he drives his train. The chorus goes like this:

Driving that train,
High on cocaine
Casey Jones you better
watch your speed.
Trouble ahead, trouble behind
And you know that potion
just crossed my mind

The lyrics go on to tell the images Casey Jones sees while driving his train.

I suppose you could look into the lyrics to any song and say this deals with drugs. But nowadays the songwriters just come out and say drugs when they mean drugs, and more and more songwriters today are writing these types of songs.

Despite the lack of a good thesis sentence, the use of weak examples, and the lack of a detailed analysis of the lyrics, this paper is not hopeless. At least it contains the basics. It can be worked on and improved.

Despite my own reservations as to what constitutes the basics, I would certainly not neglect the teaching of literacy: spelling, punctuation, capitalization and "correct grammar." But I would not place undue emphasis on literacy except as it got in the way of intelligibility and effective communication. Rather I would stress the ability to write coherent and effective sentences and paragraphs and beyond that the ability to take a simple thesis and support it in a meaningful way.

Let me expand on these ideas slightly and add to them. Basic to the composition process is a knowledge of words. Students should have a basic knowledge of prefixes, root words, and suffixes, of diction and of usage. On the sentence level, students should be acquainted with the fundamental grammatical principles of predication, modification, complementation, subordination, and coordination. On the paragraph level, students might be taught Francis Christensen's approach to the rhetoric of the paragraph (as well as newer approaches to paragraph construction) and the traditional patterns of development: analysis, classification, comparison and contrast, exemplification, and the like. Beyond the paragraph, students should know just a little bit about thesis and support, the selection of significant material, and the logical organization of ideas. But I fear that as soon as I go beyond the paragraph I am really going beyond the limits of what some teachers feel to be absolutely basic. But beyond the paragraph, I would suggest that the student attend to short expository and persuasive themes. I would not neglect personal writing, but I would

not emphasize it to the exclusion of the other modes. Many entering college freshmen unfortunately have had nothing but what they loosely call "creative writing." These students clearly need some attention to structure. On the other hand, some students have never been given the liberty to express their feelings and emotions. Diaries and journals are a must for these students.

Although I would tend to stress the discovery and organization of ideas over mechanics and grammar, I would caution anyone teaching student writing that these things do have their relative importance. As a teacher of college composition and rhetoric, I have had far too many students try to defend their sloppiness, bad spelling, poor grammar, and incoherent paragraphing with the comment that "it's the ideas that really count." I agree. The ideas do "really count." But I have seldom encountered a sloppy writer who could convey his ideas clearly and effectively. More specifically, I find it hard most of the time to separate style from content or "the basics" from the ideas they are intended to support.

If the return to the basics is what is necessary after almost a decade of neglect, if the teaching of the basics is to be more than base, if the primary function of the schools is to increase their student's power over language, then what is needed now in order to perform these basic tasks is what has always been needed:

1. a reasonable class load for English teachers (for the school and community college teacher no more than 100 students),
2. inservice training, institutes, and special courses for the teacher in the teaching of composition, and
3. more attention paid to rhetorical theory and research.

There is nothing wrong with journeys, literal or metaphorical, nor with flights of fancy. But in our trips through space, we must be careful not to get spaced out. We should fly when we can, but sometimes we may have to take a train or a car, and some of us may have to walk. As long as we don't stumble or fall along the way, we can still reach our goal, though it may take a little longer: to increase our students' power over the written word and consequently to provide them with the knowledge, experience, and pleasure which such a mastery can make possible.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"The past five years have witnessed considerable progress in the 'opening' of the high school English and social studies curriculums. In the beginning, many of these changes were cosmetic: mini or elective courses created from slicing the traditional curriculum into more discrete elements. Today there are new and provocative short courses; a real change in content is being offered. This shift, however, does not mean a movement away from the celebrated 'basics.' Any good teacher knows that content does not restrict the instructor from working on whatever student skills need attention. A teacher genuinely concerned about developing the students' writing and reading skills can succeed in a course on Shakespeare or Science Fiction. Students can become 'good citizens'--another 'basic'--in a text-oriented American Government course, or in one that follows the Watergate trials.

The point is not content but motivation. Through high interest courses, most teachers are better able to motivate students to improve their skills. We need to constantly experiment and create new 'forms,' not because these efforts are 'innovative' but because they enhance student productivity and expression. An uncritical return to the 'old ways' reflects a frightening myopia. The purpose of school is not to enshrine the past but to ensure the future." (Frank McLaughlin, "Back to Basics. . .Challenge or Copout?" MEDIA AND METHODS, Dec. 1974, pp. 9-10)

ERIC

THE EMERGING OF NEW "BASIC FUNDAMENTALS" OF ENGLISH: MEDIA

Nancy Cromer, University of South Carolina

English teachers have traditionally accepted language--verbal language--as their subject matter. For as long as English has been a subject taught in American schools, the English language has been studied principally in the contexts of its oral and written forms. Though language in its broadest sense is still the fundamental subject matter of English, the concept of language must now be expanded to include the multiple languages of communication, of which verbal language is only one. The context, or the conditions immediately surrounding the transmittal of communication, have changed; new communication technology has created new contexts in which communication exists. We English teachers can no longer limit ourselves and our students to studying the basic oral and written forms of verbal language; we must accept the new contexts in which communication exists and treat them as languages that are emerging as basic fundamentals in the study of communication.

There was a time when the contexts of communication consisted simply of language in conversational dialogue, face to face, and written language, mainly in the form of books and letters. The context of a communication form helps to determine its exact meaning; i.e., in the context of conversational dialogue, some of the meaning is carried through non-verbal communication such as intonation and facial expression.

The invention of the telegraph, which has been heralded as the beginning of the age of electronic communications, was a drastic contextual change for communication. A new condition it provided was speed of transmittal across space, as well as a curt, abbreviated form of verbal language. Telegraph communication also took on other significance: receiving a telegraph signified unusually important news, either good news or bad news. Each technological communications medium--television, film, telephone, radio, computer--has provided a new and different context for the transmittal of communication, each having some unique effect on the meaning communicated and on the verbal language used. One important example is that a substantial part of the communication of movies and television is the visual information they transmit.

Because contextualism has a significant effect on language, it is imperative that English teachers consider language in all of its possible contexts and accept as a necessary part of the study of language the new technologies that have sprung up around the transmittal of language. The effective use of these technological communication tools is of prime importance for survival in our culture which depends on them for handling, storing, and transmitting the vast amount of information that has been attributed to the "information explosion." English teachers have, either actively or by default, taken on much of the responsibility for making the new media a part of the school curriculum. They recognize that the study of the languages of the new media is basically fundamental for learning to effectively communicate in a time when these media are such a determining influence in our culture.

English teachers were among the first groups of educators to develop a sensitivity to and awareness of new communication media, probably because their affinity for verbal language provides a natural aptitude for understanding the languages of other, new media. From the ranks of English teachers came the most listened to and quoted media sage of the 1960's--Marshall McLuhan. He, along with others such as Harold Innis, Edmund Carpenter, Buckminster Fuller, Frank McLaughlin, Edmund Farrell, and John Culkin, helped to bring about a growing awareness of newer media and its educational importance. The awareness period was an awakening period, a waking up to the existence of the new reality of media. It was characterized by new insights growing out of a period of exposure to media; there was a flourish of new concepts, and a sense of dynamic and

exciting chaos. McLuhan made us aware that the medium is the message/massage, that societies are shaped more by the nature of the communication media than the content of the communication. He also made us aware of the linear nature of print and pointed out the influence that linear thinking has had in the development of our culture. The Gutenberg Printing Press, by creating a linear, sequential, step-by-step process, was responsible for such consequential phenomena as nationalism, the assembly line, the industrial revolution and a psychological mode of introspection. All of these reinforced and intensified the qualities of individualism and specialization that proved so effective in a print-oriented society.

McLuhan and the other media sages aided us in understanding the new media by describing it and its effects in common sense language. This became the basis for movement into what is currently happening: a period of consciousness, or a sense of "being at home" in the new media realities. After the awakening to a new reality, the new awareness can be enlarged through a process of becoming familiar by asking and answering questions. Through this process awareness is expanded into consciousness, which is a state of more complete understanding of the phenomenon. The initial becoming aware focuses attention and leads to further study and analysis of the phenomenon. Intense study and analysis of the new media form a broader interaction with the new media reality, bringing about more complete understanding and, consequently, more new awareness. Consciousness is a "being at home with" that develops as the new media reality more and more becomes a part of the personal life space of people. For example, television is an indispensable part of the lives of almost everyone in the United States, and through our awareness of its effects as a communication medium, we have learned to better understand the influence it has on our lives and its potential as a tool for learning.

Only the most progressive schools and teachers have accepted the study of media communication as an indispensable part of the education of young people. It will become more recognizable as we grow in consciousness that ours is an age of electronic communications--radio, cinema, telephone, television, and computer. They form a network that is entirely global in scope. In fact, according to Gene Youngblood in EXPANDED CINEMA, the intermedia communications network is so pervasive that, instead of being something <u>in</u> our environment, it actually <u>is</u> our environment. More than nature itself, the electronic communications surround us and continuously barrage us with a flow of information.

Because the communications media make possible instantaneous communication among all cultures in all parts of the world, they are having profound effects on our lives through a massive interchange of cultural information. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin coined the term noosphere to describe the film of organized intelligence that encircles the planet, now consisting of 3½ billion humans. This intelligence is linked and transformed into a perceivable state by the global intermedia network that all cultures receive common experience, which binds people together into <u>one</u> world wide culture. John McHale described it in "The Plastic Parthenon":

> World communications...diffuse and interpenetrate local cultural tradition, providing commonly shared cultural experience in a manner unprecedented in human history. Within this global network the related media share and transmit man's symbolic needs and their expression on a world scale. Besides the enlargement of the physical world, these media virtually extend our psychical environment, providing a constant stream of moving, fleeting images of the world for our daily appraisal. They provide psychic mobility for the greater mass of our citizens. Through these devices we can telescope time, move through history, and span the world in a great variety of unprecedented ways.

The influence of technology on creating a world culture is further elaborated by Jim Cromer and Charles Weingartner in a forthcoming book:

A major change has occurred in how people participate in their culture and this condition is expanding rapidly. It has been called Anthropological Perspective (Postman and Weingartner, TEACHING AS A SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY). The members of a culture have developed awareness of the characteristics of their group and study their survival mechanisms, rituals, taboos, technology and art with a detachment similar to an anthropologist. With the advent of instantaneous satellite video transmission of events happening on all parts of the globe, we have become, for the first time, a world community of people. Our anthropological perspective has spread to examination of cultural traits and patterns of people all over the globe. Before the invention of modern communication technology, cultures integrated through a slower process of emigration. Now integration of cultural traits is being achieved through spontaneous and instant saturation of one culture with traits of other cultures via video, film, radio, world-wide jet transportation service and some print media. The ramifications of this change in exposure and integration of cultures are immense. Technology has freed us from the limitations of unconsciously participating in a single culture and has made us aware of and desirous of traits found in other cultures. We can see a world culture emerging which is made up of many sub-cultures, and in the future we will be able to move freely from sub-culture to sub-culture and actually participate in several sub-cultures simultaneously.

New communications media provide a reflection to us of ourselves and the world we live in; and the media have expanded our personal world to include the whole Earth. The media are a prime force in shaping our contemporary environment. If our educational system does not recognize their importance and offer educational opportunities for learning to use the media effectively, it falls short in helping young people to achieve a high quality life in the world they find themselves in. As media consciousness continues to develop, there is no indication that its influence will diminish in the foreseeable future, but will probably continue to increase as computer intelligence is further developed and applied to a communication technology that already exists.

Language learning that is restricted to the study of verbal language is no longer sufficient for helping young people learn to effectively communicate in a world of electronic communications media. They must learn the languages of the new media. Because all young people now attending school have always been immersed in the electronic media environment, they already have an awareness of and an "at-homeness" with the media that should be allowed to develop further. One of the most important and fundamental services that English teachers can perform is to provide a situation in which young people can learn to use the new media for assimilating information, expressing themselves, and discovering new awarenesses that will help them learn to control and direct the new media force that is so pervasive and influential in their environment.

When young people are allowed and encouraged to actively use newer media for expressing their own ideas, then they can develop a knowledge of media and its effects and begin to exert control over their media environment in the form of selection and decision making about the media. Only through active use of the new media as tools for personal expression will young people gain enough knowledge of and "at-homeness" with the media to make them intelligent consumers and producers of media communication. As long as people don't have direct access to the production of media, they can have only a partial knowledge of the language of media, much like a person who can read verbal language but not write it.

It has been estimated that at least 75% of the information we intake is visual, taken in through the eyes. A large part of that information comes from the thousands and thousands of hours of viewing television and movies, much of it during the formative childhood years. To upgrade the quality of our media, and at the same time our

environment, there will have to be educated people with the ability to respond to and produce new media expression. It will probably fall to English teachers to provide education in the use of media languages, and to make a commitment to developing an all-media literacy instead of a mere print literacy. The new media languages, and the ability to communicate wisely and effectively through these new languages, may be "basic fundamentals" for survival.

- - - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

The battle between traditionalists and modernists in the teaching of grammar has been with us for many years. One particularly trying time took place in the late 1950's when NCTE published its series on THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS. J. Donald Adams writing in his "Speaking of Books" in THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW (Dec. 20, 1959) objected to NCTE's language stand.

"There is an organization called the National Council of Teachers of English, whose attitudes and activities constitute one of the chief threats to the cultivation of good English in our schools. If you doubt this, you have only to examine its publications. You will find its attitudes summarized in a pamphlet just issued by the Council for Basic Education--A CITIZENS MANUAL FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, by Mortimer Smith. They are set forth fully in three volumes issued by the National Council of Teachers of English, and prepared by its Commission on the English Curriculum: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, LANGUAGE ARTS FOR TODAY'S CHILDREN, and THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL, all published by Appleton-Century-Crofts.

In effect, the commission throws the whole matter of good usage out the window. For good usage it substitutes 'levels of usage,' and insistently maintains that 'students should not be encouraged to believe that the language of one level is necessarily better or worse than that of another.' Instead, they should be taught that good English 'is the English appropriate for the particular occasion in which it is used.' If a student asks if it is correct to say, 'Can I have some candy?' the commission suggests that he be advised to observe the speech of various persons in the community, to watch for this expression in stories and articles, and to consult recent usage studies; then he 'can prepare a report of value to himself and to the class.' What he won't get, observes Mr. Smith, 'is an answer to his question. For the teacher to give a categorical answer would be to commit the ultimate pedagogical sin of teaching a definite body of doctrine.'"

"Black and brown students in San Francisco high schools are being killed with kindness, a team of Stanford University researchers has concluded.

High school teachers, mostly white, are misleading minority students about their scholastic abilities by overpraising them, handing out good grades for poor work and by showering the students with warmth and friendliness but not demanding sound academic performance, according to the study.

'This is a study without villains,' said Sanford M. Dornbusch, professor of sociology at Stanford and the study's principal researcher. 'What we have found is a system in which well-meaning people are perpetuating the low achievement of black and Chicano students.'" (William Trombley, "S.F. Minority Students Misled, Study Finds," LOS ANGELES TIMES, Oct. 5, 1975, p. I-3)

Speaking about the conflict between proponents of innovation and proponents of a return to the basics, Joe Stocker sounds one warning about some schools that return to a traditional education. "The Council for Basic Education, a conservatively-inclined organization which has manned the front lines against what it regards as excesses of open-classroom education, is sounding a cautionary note, too. Some of the 'conservative alternative' programs, it says, 'contain some simplistic battle cries of doubtful merit, such as 'bring back the paddle,' 'teach truth, justice and patriotism' and 'what we need is a dress code.''" ("Controversery Flares Over 'Back-To-Basics' Schools," TEMPE DAILY NEWS, May 14, 1975, p. 4)

FORGING AHEAD TO THE BASICS

Joseph F. Brunner, Montclair State College, Upper Montclair, New Jersey

Some Opening Thoughts

After much thought and deliberation over how best to treat the topic "Basics and Reading Instruction," I've concluded two things. First, all that needs to be said about this important issue cannot possibly be stated in the space alloted to me. Second, as a student of reading I'm still learning about the process itself. This latter statement is not meant to be an excuse for the discussion which follows, but a realistic statement based on this human's capacity to absorb and assimilate the wealth of new valuable information emerging from such disciplines as psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology.

Perhaps our major problem in dealing with the issue of how children learn to read is that we have approached the topic from the wrong perspective, albeit a logical one. For example, historically we defined the behaviors necessary for successful reading by looking at unsuccessful reading. That is, we took children who were perhaps two or three years behind their peers in reading and diagnosed all the skills they didn't "have." These data when compiled indicated that "Johnny" had visual perceptual problems, auditory perceptual problems, motor problems, ad nauseam. It followed logically then that all we needed to do to help Johnny learn to read was to remediate these deficiencies. Logical? Yes. Valid? No! Commenting on perceptual-motor activities in the treatment of reading disability, Balow stated:

> Surprisingly, in numerous searches of the literature by this author...no experimental study... has been found that demonstrates special effectiveness for any of the physical, motor, or perceptual programs claimed to be useful in the prevention or correction of reading... (Bruçe Balow, "Perceptual-motor Activities in the Treatment of Severe Reading Disability," READING TEACHER, March 1971, pp. 513-525.)

Furthermore, in summarizing the literature on auditory discrimination, Samuels reported:

> Few areas in psychology present a more perplexing picture with conflicting viewpoints than the area of auditory discrimination...Recent criticism of methods of testing discrimination as well as the tests themselves leads one to take a stance of caution with regard to claims that discrimination problems are important factors in reading underachievement. (Jay S. Samuels, "Success and Failure in Learning to Read: A Critique of the Research," READING RESEARCH QUARTERLY, Winter 1973, pp. 200-239.)

Unfortunately, despite the writings of Balow and Samuels we have not significantly altered our approach to the investigation of what is basic to the reading process. Instead of preoccupying our time with such things as perceptual anomalies we have chosen to engage ourselves with the rhetoric of "simple basic skills." After all, who would disagree with the notion that Johnny needs basic skills in order to read? The problem arises when we attempt to ascertain whose list of basic skills children need, and in what sequence these skills should be presented, if any. Some new reading management systems claim 450 skills as part of their content, yet teachers familiar with basals find no such claims. As Arning and Brunner pointed out, teachers should be aware of these discrepancies when selecting materials and look for content validation data when reviewing publisher's claims. (C. Arning and J. Brunner, "Reading Materials: Caveat Emptor," THE READING INSTRUCTION JOURNAL, June 1975, pp. 58-60.)

Since what I choose to call the "skills argument" often leads to a reductionist approach to teaching, i.e. each skill treated separately with little positive results,

ERIC

I have chosen not to pursue this path any further. Rather, I have chosen to present what appears to me to be essentials of the reading/learning process especially as they relate to schooling.

Essentials of the Instructional Setting

It seems to me that in any instructional setting there are three things that are essential to learning. We have the learner, the teacher (however defined), and we have instructional materials of various types. As I view it, these are the basics, no more, no less. As we develop our discussion around these three areas hopefully a sense of their importance in relation to how children learn to read will evolve.

The Learner and Basic #1

By the time a child enters school he is fully competent in his language. He has mastered, aside from vocabulary, the sound system and the grammar system of his language. Up to the time formal schooling began most of the child's learning about his language was the direct result of his engagement in the language process itself. The child went through a series of "stages" whereby he learned more about his language by creating language, by experimenting with different forms of his language, and by determining what control he could exert over his environment through these linguistic manipulations. Throughout this language development period the child was responsible for his learning, not some instructor.

Now it seems to me that the same principle applies to learning to read. That is, the child will learn more about reading through engaging in the activity often. To some of you this statement may seem obvious, to others, superfluous. However, as Smith indicates, "The...measures taken when a child is identified as a reading problem frequently result in the child reading less than he was before." (Frank Smith, PSYCHOLINGUISTICS AND READING, NY: Holt, 1973.) This admonition is obviously valid for children as they begin to read also. The sad fact is that my experience in the past several years as a Title I evaluator of reading programs supports Smith's observation. Children are reading less in our schools today than ever before! As one Title I coordinator stated in response to my inquiry regarding the need for more reading books and materials, "I don't need or want any more books, but I would like more paper to run those machines." Reading in this school was synonymous with ditto sheets. Perhaps not so ironically, this coordinator's office was housed in a room called "the duplicating center."

One axiom to improving the reading performances of all children is, engage them in the activity often. This is one basic I should like to see us get "back to."

Instructional Materials and Basic #2

Similar to the language learning process the child will be best accommodated by our instructional efforts if we select materials that: (a) are interesting and meaningful to him, (b) extend his current knowledge of the language/reading process, and (c) help him work out some of his unanswered questions about the reading process. In my opinion this is what Ken Goodman is referring to when he calls reading a "psycholinguistic guessing game." In other words, similar to language learning, when reading the child must have an opportunity to make hypotheses about the language he is to read, test out some of those hunches through extensive reading, and if necessary formulate new hypotheses about the code he is encountering. Reading materials should then be selected based on their merit in helping the child learn about reading while reading. To a large degree the skill-workbook type materials which have become all too common in our schools' reading programs are inadequate in fulfilling this function. An example should help point out what I mean.

Recently I had the opportunity to observe some 1st grade children doing reading-workbook activities. The children were instructed to "use their knowledge of the /sp/ sound to read and complete some sentences. There were approximately twenty sentences which contained a matching picture clue to the /sp/ "sound" and the missing word. For example one sentence read, "Mary ate her ice cream with a __________." (picture of a spoon) The children were to use the picture clue and their knowledge of the /sp/ sound to arrive at the word "spoon." A simple enough task for 1st graders? Perhaps, except the following sentence was also included in this exercise. "Johnny dug the hole with a __________." In attempting to supply the missing word the children were observed uttering the sound associated with /sh/. Since their "semantic expectation" as Goodman (Kenneth Goodman, "Decoding From Code to What?" in Thomas Barrett, Althea Beery, and William Powell (eds.), ELEMENTARY READING INSTRUCTION: SELECTED MATERIALS (2nd ed.), Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974, p. 15-23) calls it was /shovel/, their attempts to utilize the "decoding" clue /sp/ (for spade; the picture clue was no help here either), served to confuse them. Furthermore, in their workbooks the response /shovel/ was marked wrong by their teacher. The problem in this instance was that the "clue" supplied by the instructional materials interfered with the conceptual process of the children.

This brings us to Basic #2, which is, reading materials should be as unambiguous in nature as possible so as not to confuse the child in his task. If materials exist in your curriculum which interfere with the child's search for meaning, they may cause reading difficulties.

The Teacher and Basic #3

Most of us believe that the teacher is the key to a child's success or failure in school. However, it is quite another thing to spell out what makes for successful teaching. One thing seems fairly certain to me, that is, there exists a wide variety of teaching styles which have differential effects on children's learning. Therefore, I feel that little is to be gained from teacher education programs which set up rigid prescriptions on how best to behave with children. I do feel that much is to be learned from utilizing some of the observational methodology which these programs use. An example should help illustrate the point being considered here.

Not very long ago I observed a teacher conducting a lesson on what she referred to as "the one vowel, one syllable rule." Children were asked to "decode" (not read), from a list of words on the chalkboard. The first word on the list was /amen/, the second word was /able/, etc. In round robin fashion a group of about 8 students read these words and after the reading of each word the teacher would remark something like, "Can we all see the rule in operation?" Included in that list was the word /aged/. When it came to one child's turn he responded /aged/ as a one syllable word. The teacher retorted, "No, remember our rule at work." At this point the child did not respond. The teacher called on someone else, with no better result. The teacher obviously felt the need to speed up the lesson (after all, I was observing her), so she said the word is /a ged/ with two syllables. Now the children seemed totally confused. One child blurted out, "You mean the cheese /a ged/?" Now the teacher defended her lesson by saying, "For this exercise, the pronunciation is /a ged/ because it follows the rule we're talking about."

Unfortunately, I had the opportunity to observe other lessons in other schools which were similar in nature. Further anecdotes cannot be shared in this limited space, but the point is, that as teachers we should be highly critical of our methodology and constantly ask ourselves if what we are doing is helping children discover more about the language/reading process. Basic #3 then is, as teachers, we should develop a questioning attitude about our performance with children. Some questions we can ask ourselves are: Is the emphasis in my reading lesson on rule learning? If so,

have the rules become ends in themselves, and how do the children respond to this type of instruction? Do my children have to articulate the rules in order to do well in my class? Is this any different than memorization? Finally, is this what the reading process is all about? These and other questions can best be answered if teachers monitor their behavior through video and audio taping, peer observations, etc., and evaluate their lessons in terms of what they know about the reading process.

Summary Statement

The preceding discussion was aimed at sharing with the reader what I consider to be essential or basic in order to help children help themselves learn to read. Since in my opinion we have never implemented these basics, there is nothing to return to. With these suggestions as our starting point, let's forge ahead to the basics!

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

Willard Waller's THE SOCIOLOGY OF TEACHING (NY: John Wiley, 1965, first published in 1932) is a quite dull title of a quite exciting book still very much worth reading today. Here are a few bits still controversial with many people.

"Teachers are paid agents of cultural diffusion. They are hired to carry light into dark places. To make sure that teachers have some light, standard qualifications for teachers have been evolved. Not only must the teacher know enough to teach the youngsters in the schools competently according to the standards of the community, but he must, usually, be a little beyond his community. From this it follows that the teacher must always be a little discontented with the community he lives in. The teacher is a martyr to cultural diffusion." (p. 40)

"Undoubtedly the fact that teachers must be models of whatever sort of morality is accepted as orthodox in the community imposes upon the teacher many disqualifications. With regard to sex, the community is often very brutal indeed. It is part of the American credo that school teachers reproduce by budding." (p. 45)

"From the ideal point of view, parents and teachers have much in common, in that both, supposedly, wish things to occur for the best interests of the child; but, in fact, parents and teachers usually live in a condition of mutual distrust and enmity. Both wish the child well, but it is such a different kind of well that conflict must inevitably arise over it. The fact seems to be that parents and teachers are natural enemies, predestined each for the discomfiture of the other. The chasm is frequently covered over, for neither parents nor teachers wish to admit to themselves the uncomfortable implications of their animosity, but on occasion it can make itself clear enough." (p. 68)

"The Office of Education in the Department of Health Education and Welfare should be abolished and all federal aid to education ended, former Gov. Ronald Reagan said Friday.

'Federal aid to education has undermined the fundamental values, the teachings of parents,' he told representatives of the National Right to Life Committee, Inc., here.

Reagan said, without qualification, that the federal government 'should not be involved in education.' Schools and the entire educational process, he said, should be run at the local level.

The Californian, currently on a national campaign tour to sound out his chances for the Republican presidential nomination next year, previously had questioned whether there was a correlation between the advent of federal aid to education and a lowering of test scores on college entrance examinations. But Friday was the first time he went as far as to call for a total abolition of federal school aid and, specifically, the 'dismantling' of the Office of Education.

He said he had been told that Francis Keppel, former commissioner of education, once admitted that the real reason for federal aid to schools was to achieve a 'social purpose.'" (Richard Bergholz, "Reagan Urges End to All Federal Aid for Schools," LOS ANGELES TIMES, October 25, 1975, p. 10)

BACK TO WHAT BASE?

Charles E. Davis, University of Arizona

The back-to-the-basics movement is upon the high-school English curriculum, and I have mixed feelings about what is happening, not unlike the way I regard the coming of summer rains, hoping they will bring relief to the parched air, dreading that they will rage and tear away much that is worthwhile. Doubtless the English curriculum needs a cleansing of its current abuses; doubtless too that purging may be overdone and remove not only the bad, but the good as well. What is wrong at the moment is that the high-school English program has almost no support outside the high-school English department. What may soon be wrong is that a back-to-the-basics program will be unacceptable to the teachers who are assigned to teach it. In the pellmell rush back to basics we had better give a close look at just what basics we are rushing back to.

There are, of course, many factors other than curriculum that cause problems for the high-school English teacher. There is class size. Increasingly we find teacher loads of more than 150 students daily and rarely a class with fewer than thirty students. There is the problem of the general decline in esteem for and utility of clear writing and speaking. Major works of literature are reduced to fit the multiple-of-thirty-minute schedule of television and then punctuated and reduced by commercials. But these are minor problems compared to the major problem that the high-school English curriculum has lost the the respect of two groups whose support is indispensable. Parents and taxpayers no longer believe that high-school English teachers are doing their jobs. And college and university teachers of English do not believe it either. When a high-school curriculum has lost the support of both the public and a substantial number of teachers of its discipline, that curriculum is in trouble.

What high-school English teachers are likely to reply is that professors and parents simply do not understand that the contemporary students are different from any that have gone before. Students demand a curriculum that is relevant, one that gives individual choice in what they will learn. I can reply only that there has never been a time when parents did not think that their children were different; that there are few professors who do not hope that their new students will be different from their last; that there is nothing irrelevant about a sound curriculum; and that there is no one I know who believes that students learn any way other way than individually. Relevance does not have to mean anti-intellectualism, but that is what relevance has come to mean. A curriculum with electives does not have to disregard sequence in instruction, but that is exactly what most elective curricula do.

I do not want to appear that I stand alone when I express these opinions. I have already claimed as support the opinions of my colleagues in colleges and universities, and I believe these opinions have been widely reported in current newspapers and periodicals. I have claimed the support of other parents, and I base this on what I have heard in PTA meetings I have attended and all kinds of parents' groups I have met with. I also claim the support of recent high-school graduates. This fall I was asked to give a short talk to English teachers in Phoenix, and I prepared for that occasion by distributing a questionaire to students currently enrolled in freshman English at the University of Arizona. I questioned randomly only students from the metropolitan Phoenix area, but I think similar results might be obtained by extending the survey to other areas. Below I report the opinions of students taking English 2, the first-semester course for average students.

1. How many semesters of high-school English have the students taken? An average

ERIC

of 7.5 semesters. The mode, the most frequently reported number, was eight semesters.

2. How many semesters did the student receive instruction in composition? An average of 3.43 semesters. The mode was two semesters.
3. What did the students think of their high-school training?

Excellent	9%
Good	33%
Weak	48%
Poor	9%

4. How relevant to their education was their training in English?

Excellent	5%
Good	14%
Weak	57%
Poor	24%

I concede that students' opinions may be heavily influenced by the fact that they are enrolled in freshman English; I concede that what is relevant to the high-school student may be different from what is relevant to a student in a university; I still infer that most students do not believe that they have had the training they think is relevant to their education.

At the University of Arizona we are constantly encountering students who have never read a book another adult has even heard of. Gone are the days of the abridged SILAS MARNER; come are the days of relevance. Gone is HUCKLEBERRY FINN or THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE; come is the day of . . . Alas, have I forgotten the title? No, now I remember: the student forgot the title, forgot the author, forgot the characters' names and forgot what the book was really about, but it was relevant; it was chosen to illustrate a theme, such as racial prejudice or generation gap. I am confronted with the opinion that novels and plays and poems are written in support of causes. I am reminded that Richard Lovell Edgeworth once made his children memorize Macbeth's "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow . . ." as a warning against procrastination. We now have high-school graduates to whom OTHELLO will always be a play which illustrates the inevitable result of racism, if they have read OTHELLO at all.

I mention training in literature first, but I am also concerned with today's relevant, individualized standards for writing. We still get the you-know-what-I-mean argument when a paper is judged vague or the everyone-has-a-right-to-their-own-opinion argument when the paper is judged irrational. These, of course, are not new arguments. I am sure Aristotle heard them. What is new is the uncomfortable suspicion that these arguments may have been accepted as valid in high-school classes. They are not valid at all. Playing the game that one's reader must guess what one really means is never going to result in clear writing; and the truth is that nobody has any sort of right to an opinion based on ignorance or prejudice.

I am certain that the back-to-the-basics movement is more than anything else a reaction to the current inadequacies of the high-school English curriculum. What I fear is that the reaction may lead to a program that will be worse, a program in which abridged classics take the place of properly chosen literature, in which endless diagraming of sentences takes the place of writing papers, and in which drill in obsolete locutions takes the place of an understanding of language. I am disturbed that the student is now shortchanged in reading mature literature, but I do not want to return to the day of the abridged classic and its accompanying objective tests. I am disturbed that students' writing is undisciplined and uninspired, but I do not believe that inspired, disciplined writing is the result of endless drill in workbooks. Surely something better can come from our current concerns.

If we are going back to basics, the basics we ought to go back to are the art

of literature, the art of composition, and the art of language, written and spoken. These are the arts English teachers know most about, and they are the arts which seem most ignored right now. Getting a student to the point where he appreciates a great work of literature is hard work and so is getting a student to the point where he can write and speak the language with clarity and accuracy; but these are worthwhile tasks, tasks for which most English teachers are prepared, tasks which the public believes ought to be the aims of instructors, and tasks which when cast aside or ignored in the high-school curriculum result not only in the kind of discontent we now have, but also in a decline in the quality of our society.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"More than 23 million American adults, one in every five, lack the basic know-how to function effectively in society, according to a study released Wednesday by the U.S. Office of Education.

'It is surprising, perhaps even shocking,' the report said, 'to suggest that approximately one of five Americans is incompetent or functions with difficulty and that about half of the adult population is merely functional and not at all proficient in necessary skills and knowledges.'

The $1 million study, conducted by the University of Texas at Austin, attempted to redefine 'literacy' and measure the competence of a person to function in an adult world.

The researchers said they had found the situation more dismal than believed previously." ("1 in 5 Adults Lacks Basic Living Skills, Study Finds," LOS ANGELES TIMES, October 30, 1975, p. I-1)

"Although I have frequently inveighed against the teaching of English grammar, since most students refuse to learn it, and research in several countries over a long period of time has shown little, if any, connection between any type of grammar, traditional or modern, and improvement in writing, I have to admit that most teachers of composition devote an inordinate amount of time to it. I often suspect that they run away from the problem of teaching writing and teach grammar instead." (Paul B. Diederich, MEASURING GROWTH IN ENGLISH, Urbana: NCTE, 1974, p. 81)

Exploring the reasons for the decline of literacy in the United States, Vance Packard advances 7 reasons: "(1) Writing as an educational subject has lost status. (2) The growing use of multiple-choice questions for testing reading, writing and other subjects. (3) The overloading of English teachers and instructors with students. (4) The widespread sale of term papers on college campuses. (5) Automatic promotion in schools, open admissions to colleges. (6) A revolt against rules and established ways. (7) Finally, and perhaps most important, the unanticipated side effects of the telecommunications revolution." ("Are We Becoming a Nation of Illiterates?" THE READER'S DIGEST, April 1974, pp. 81-85)

"Recommendation 6: ENGLISH COMPOSITION. The time devoted to English composition during the four years should occupy about half the total time devoted to the study of English. Each student should be required to write an average of one theme a week. Themes should be corrected by the teacher. In order that teachers of English have adequate time for handling these themes, no English teacher should be responsible for more than one hundred pupils.

To test the ability of each student in English composition, a schoolwide composition test should be given in every grade; in the ninth and eleventh grades, these composition tests should be graded not only by the teacher but by a committee of the entire school. Those students who do not obtain a grade on the eleventh-grade composition test commensurate with their ability as measured by an aptitude test should be required to take a special course in English composition in the twelfth grade." (James Bryant Conant, THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL TODAY, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1959, pp. 50-51)

RONALD REAGAN'S RIGOROUS DRILLS AND THE SWINGING '60'S ENGLISH ELECTIVES

Beverly Haley, Fort Morgan High School, Fort Morgan, Colorado

Several weeks ago, an evening edition of the DENVER POST ran an editorial written by Ronald Reagan. The editorial is a plea for English teachers to go "back to the basics." Basics to Reagan apparently means "plain old readin' and writin'." He bases his argument on a recent news story concerning a survey by the Association of Departments of English. The survey of 436 colleges reported that "students are leaving high school with a much poorer training in fundamentals than before."

Reagan points to verbal inadequacies of youth evidenced by such recent expressions as "ya know--like--I mean" and blames this verbal inadequacy on the permissiveness of the 1960's English electives curriculum. His solution calls for a return to what he remembers as "those endless grammar drills; stuffing your head with rules and exceptions-to-rules. . . singsong recitations of 'Evangeline' or 'The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner'. . ." which, he continues, now appear to be the true "key to one's ability to write clearly. . ." Reagan's solution to the problem of how to turn students into literate adults is "rigorous drills. . .compulsory courses. . . a well-planned and supervised reading program. . ."

If all the English teachers in the schools today were to follow Reagan's formula, the task of teaching English would instantly become a far, far easier one than we have ever known. And if all English teachers in America today were to believe in Reagan's formula, I could not believe in a future for America.

Rules without reason, drills without meanings, writing and reading without imagination, mechanical expression without expression of self. These are "basics"? Basics perhaps for turning out a nation of robots; certainly not for human beings.

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein said, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." To employ the mechanics of language without imagination is to limit a person's world to that of a veritable wasteland. Without ideas and emotions, there is no need for language. Reagan's attack on the '60's approach is justified in the sense that in its permissive extreme, it is almost as shallow an approach as Reagan's rigorous drills. The '60's extreme of disorganized, unrelated, irresponsible "creativity" without structure restricts the individual to living in a world alone because he cannot go outside the limits of self to connect himself with others--he does not possess the tools for making this connection. Both these paths of extremism are narrow and self-centered. Both destroy. Neither is creative.

Reagan fails in his editorial to reach for the real basic--the basic of human potential, the basic that makes humans human. To be human is to create. To create is to possess the ability to express one's self in some concrete form. Creativity is what keeps humans from being like Malvina Reynolds' "Little Boxes" that all look the same--or from being one of T.S. Eliot's "Hollow Men"--or from being a product of Aldous Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD.

Creativity is what makes a musical composition different with each person or group that plays it and brings the music to life in a new way. It's what makes the difference between a dinner that is a matter of consuming calories to keep one from starvation or a sensory delight to savor and exclaim over and remember. It's what makes the performance of a dance by a creative dancer a living experience for the viewer. It's what makes the difference between reading a novel imaginatively and merely reading the words because it's a book everyone's talking about. Creativity is what makes life exciting and mysterious and unpredictable and wonderful!

ERIC

Reagan's editorial speaks in half-truths, as so many other newspaper items have in recent months that are advocating a "back to the basics" in English teaching. Part of the ability to be creative with language is possessing the tools for language creativity. These tools include 1) a knowledge of and facility with language skills (or Reagan's "plain old readin' and writin'"), 2) a wide variety and background of life and language experiences, and 3) a great deal of exercise in using language imaginatively. Before these elements can be put into effect, though, there must be a need or a desire--a motivating force--to use language in the most effective and creative way possible.

William Faulkner says in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech that an initial requirement for writing well is that the writer must put all fear aside. He says that good writers create out of the materials of the human spirit--that they write of the "problems of the human heart in conflict with itself"--and that they are motivated to write out of love, not lust. Superficial reasons or motives do not produce good writing. Faulkner's élan vital of the human voice includes courage, endurance, responsibility, and a desire to listen and respond solely to the human spirit.

The creative process is different for each person, but certainly amateurs can learn by listening to the professionals. In his essay "Zen and the Art of Writing," Ray Bradbury describes the technique he uses in the creative process. This process consists of three parts, but the parts must work together as the parts of an automobile work together. If one part is not functioning, the entire mechanism becomes crippled. Bradbury's formula is: Work. Relaxation. Don't Think.

What this means is that first a writer must turn out quantities of writing (in English classes, include reading and listening and speaking). During this process of grinding out quantity, the writer learns skills and techniques and constantly searches for more effective ways to express what he feels. "Not to work is to cease, to tighten up, become nervous," says Bradbury, "and therefore destructive of the creative process."

After a writer has produced quantities of work, his body and brain can work automatically for him. He doesn't have to think about dangling participles and organizing a paragraph clearly. He doesn't have to think about where to place a comma or how to spell a word. Those processes become--out of sheer quantity of practice--largely automatic. The mind can then relax. It's like learning to swim or ride a bike or prepare a meal--after concentrating on each particular part of the process, the process eventually becomes an automatic whole.

When the mind is freed, it can plumb the depths of its own subconscious and open itself to input from the outside world. Those things from the subconscious and those from outside self then begin to bubble and boil and brew up marvelous new concoctions. Bradbury says, "What do you think of the world?. . . Let the world burn through you. Throw the prism light, white hot, on paper. Make your own individual spectroscopic reading."

Bradbury adds that work in the sense he's using it equals love. This echoes what Faulkner said about creating out of the materials of the human spirit--creating out of love, not lust. Reagan's editorial completely ignores the reason for good reading and good writing. The '60's electives approach neglects how to produce good reading and writing.

To produce this good reading and good writing, English classroom structure demands some additons to Faulkner's and Bradbury's advice to embryonic writers. Teachers must work with a number of students who are not motivated and who are of many levels of ability in language use. The logical place to begin is with a highly moti-

vated, caring teacher who will consciously go about building an atmosphere that will encourage creative productivity in his students.

1) The student needs to feel comfortable in his classroom surroundings.
2) The student cannot feel fear of his teacher, his fellow students, or of himself.
3) The teacher should help the student feel a reason to read, write, listen, speak effectively and imaginatively. He should encourage the student to feel emotion--anger, love, hate, sorrow, fear, desire--so that he will want to verbalize that emotion. In short, the teacher must try to bring his students to life or bring life to his students.
4) The student should understand clearly what he is expected to do and how he is to do it. He can be highly creative within the bounds of a clearly structured assignment. He needs structure, but he must have freedom to express himself within that structure.
5) The teacher should provide a variety of learning experiences. A student's curiosity and desire to express himself should be aroused through exposure to a wide variety of ideas and of ways to express reactions to those ideas.
6) The student deserves an audience (besides just the teacher) for his efforts with opportunity for feedback. This gives him the incentive to continue to grow and to deepen his language creativity.

Perhaps none of our students will be William Faulkners or Ray Bradburys, but each of them deserves the chance to explore and develop his own unique language potential.

To achieve this goal it is vital to equip students with mechanical skills, but at the same time it is vital to provide many opportunities to exercise imaginative powers. Reagan insists that creative language experiences should be offered <u>only</u> "after the student has a strong foundation of reading and grammatical writing--not before."

What Reagan ignores is the fact that by the time a child is three years old, he generally has a working facility with his language. He also has infinite curiosity and an incredible ability to observe the minutest of details and to see things in completely fresh, original ways. Reagan's system will kill a child's imagination by threatening him or boring him or confusing him. The '60's system denies him a system for expression. What the child needs is for someone to provide him with the language tools he needs to express what his imagination conceives. The tools are given to the child when he has a readiness for them.

Good English teachers have provided a full language experience for their students in every generation, no matter what current educational fad happens along. Good English teachers continue to provide a full language experience for their students within the framework of whatever current system their schools are prescribing.

- - - - - - - - - -

<u>SHOPTALK</u>:

"I want to see schools begin to serve the needs of society. Ancient Sparta needed warriors, Athens needed a sense of the hero, the ancient Hebrews needed knowledge of the Testament, nineteenth-century Americans needed managers and technicians--and the schools responded beautifully in each case by providing the kind of people the society needed. What do we need now? I believe that we need to restore faith, honesty, humanity. And I am suggesting in deep seriousness that we must, in the school, begin to reward these traits as the Spartans rewarded physical fitness. I want children rank ordered on the basis of humanism as we rank order on the basis of reading and mathematics. I'm dead serious. When I was a kid, deportment was always a grade. In a funny way I want that, but instead of deportment I want him graded on humanism: How kind is he? How nurturant is he?" (Jerome Kagan, "What Children Can Do," INTELLECTUAL DIGEST, November 1973, p. 80, reprinted from SATURDAY REVIEW OF EDUCATION)

ERIC

"LET'S REVIEW OUR DEDUCTIONS RATHER THAN RACE TO RETREAT AND ERASE ALL CHOICE"

Bette Bacon, Westwood High School, Mesa

Oh, that I could supply the panacea for these troubled times, but all I see is mounting frustrations and bottles of Excedrin for English teachers. There is enough evidence out now to support the conclusion that writing and reading skills, the basics of most concern to English teachers, have decreased in the last ten years. Scholastic Aptitude tests are down about 7% some report. College Board tests show a steady decline in the last ten years. Colleges report that Bonehead English is becoming standard for a majority of freshmen rather than just a few. Even some students are complaining that they are not adequately prepared for the world's demands. Public schools are inheriting the problem both because it is within their domain and because it is one of the few places where society can still be heard and invoke a change. Within the schools, English teachers are shouldering most of the burden because writing and reading skills are thought of as their concern alone. Such isolation of the problem is not only illogical, it is panic causing. That plus the pressure and the unknown of the future merely causes those accused to retreat to a known formula (basic skills) simply because it is known, not because it is best. In the race, major questions and alternatives are ignored and choices erased.

Currently, such simplification of the problem seems to fall into this syllogism:

By increasing time, discipline, and emphasis on writing and reading, basic skills will be adequate.

We have not stressed the basic skills enough in the last ten years.

Therefore, basic skills have decreased.

Unfortunately, while this may be valid, it is terribly incomplete. Worse yet, it is not an accurate deduction of what people are really thinking. The following syllogism comes closer:

Competency in basic skills makes students disciplined, employable in better jobs, and fully capable of beating the economic woes of this decade.

We have not stressed the basic skills enough to make students competent.

Therefore, students are less disciplined, less employable, and less capable of avoiding the current economic problems.

Obviously the deduction is faulty, yet many are hoping that it is not. In effect, however, English teachers are being asked to solve not only basic skill difficulties but also the troubles of an entire society. That job is not only frustrating but nearly impossible. Many major questions, or deductions, must be considered by all of us, teachers, administrators and society, before the decision on returning to the basics is reached.

One of the major questions ignored by the deduction above is just what is included in the return to the basics. It is assumed that we all agree. Nothing could be further from the truth. Some say that basics includes a study of traditional grammar, punctuation, capitalization and spelling. Others place emphasis on expository writing and organization or perhaps writing closer to the style of new journalism. One need only consult the A paper example in the recent Arizona State University brochure for freshman composition papers to see the change in style from even ten years ago. Even if all did agree on the teaching of unity, coherence, and order, for example, we would not all agree on the way it should be taught. Even if parents were consulted, one would find the same diversification. Obviously we are not all taking the same path back nor is the destination well marked.

A second perplexing question which must be answered is just why are we teaching

the basics. According to the syllogism of some it is to increase competency with the language for adequate if not excellent communication. Such a goal is most worthy, but it seems that such communication is thought of valuable only in the work world. Could it be that we are reducing the high goals of education to the perfection of mechanics for the job market only? This may well be wrong but cannot be ignored. Such a reduction really would cheat students and parents out of an education which has previously provided introductions to great thinkers, new ideas, and disciplined control of the mind.

Another major question which must be considered, though it is unpleasant, is just how many students are the schools going to educate and how far will these students be taken in the system. For many years in this country, schools were designed for the middle and upper classes. Lower class students were carried only as far as they could keep pace. As studies showed the beginning disadvantages of this group, educators spent more effort retaining and training these students. Though this alone may not have been the cause of the present troubles, it did seem to fill classrooms with slower moving students who could not be flunked out without the risk of administrative and parent complaint. To accommodate them, however, teachers often had to ease standards. Some hoped that individualized programs would handle this variety of student ability, but trying to design a program for 150 to 175 students a day became impossible if not unrealistic. As standards slipped though, the upper classes began to place their children in private schools. The low student received more and more federal programs. The middle class student seems to have been robbed of the education that had made the difference to his parents and his parents' friends.

In an effort to correct this problem approximately one third of the states in the country have started requiring state tests for high school graduation. In the state of Arizona, students must be reading at a ninth grade level in order to graduate. The state is also moving toward a similar basic skills test requirement. Unfortunately the major deduction is being avoided. If the test really is the device that stops graduation, then we must adjust to the fact that not every child will reach the standard or that the standard will be so easy that the diploma remains worthless. Even within the classroom, if standards are tightened and maintained, students will flunk out. Some parents are going to be both angry and surprised. Let me assure you such hostility will be readily passed on to the individual teacher. In addition, less students means less money, and whether or not we like it, this will affect school business. Many districts now have expensive buildings and faculties to maintain. If the student population drops significantly, so does the number of teachers. Obviously this question is a major one of educational philosophy. It is also one that should be discussed by schools and society. Just teaching the basics will not solve this, nor hide it for long.

Still another question which should be considered is who is going to lead the people through this problem. Part of the blame throwing has occurred because of the leadership problem. For years schools have been the "litmus paper" of society. It is rather humorous that when schools, particularly English departments, have tried so hard to adapt to a changing, highly diversified society they would be accused of doing it incorrectly. Unfortunately the problem is that society doesn't know where it is headed either. Let's face it: speeding technology has us all guessing. My concern is, that as a group we honestly deal with it rather than ignore it.

This, of course, nips at the edge of a most pressing question which is just how valuable will reading and writing be in the future. In effect, one must evaluate the impact of media and technology on this society. Admittedly, this is a difficult question, but it must be answered. For some time Marshall McLuhan, to name only one, has said that books and reading will become obsolete in the future. Information will be transferred more visually and orally. Eric Segal recently expressed the similar

view that whether or not we like it, reading and writing will become a skill of the elite only in the future. This may not be true, but teachers and society must deal with the facts that children watch television on an average of three hours a day and that many parents as well obtain much if not most of their news and other information from the television. Some teachers thought possibly these men were right and they began to teach critical thinking and analysis of film and television. Believe me, they were not showing films for fun. If this analysis is correct, however, having English teachers return to the teaching of the basics will most likely increase the cries of irrelevant. If the prognosticators are wrong, we must still evaluate the impact of the media on this society, and English teachers must enlist the help of businessmen, colleges, parents and other teachers to help stress the importance of clear writing. They cannot do it alone.

The last major deduction that must be considered is that because of the trouble now, the ideas of the last ten years, including the elective system, must be all wrong. While there are grounds for complaint, it seems many are overlooking the good points of the elective system in particularl and conveniently forgetting the complaints against the older system. In any case, it will be hard for the public to receive accurate information because the trend has swayed reporters as well. Traditional schools are now in and alternative schools are out. Honest evaluation is difficult.

One of the very valuable pluses of the elective system is the element of choice. Students seem more content choosing their classes, and different student abilities are more easily handled with less stigma than in the traditional system because of the choice available. It seems particularly that in this time of great question and diversity that some choice should still be provided for students, parents and teachers. Perhaps a blend of the more traditional approach and the elective approach is still possible. The blend here proposed may not startle a soul. Worse yet, it might not work. It is hoped that it might buy some time for reviewing our logic while allowing choice and improving skills.

The suggestion is to require credits of composition, literature, and perhaps reading but allow a selection of courses to meet the requirement. For example, students would be required to obtain one full credit of composition, ½ credit of literature and ½ credit of reading plus an additional one credit of English electives. Each student would take a ninth grade proficiency test and based on those scores, parents and students would be counseled on the best courses to take out of the selection. _When_ he took the courses, however, would be up to the parent and teacher and student as long as two composition classes were not scheduled concurrently. Below are the possible composition classes. They are in more detail than the others because it seems more departments have deficiencies here than in reading or literature. Any two classes could be chosen from the list below; however it would not be wise to jump from Fundamental English to Advanced Composition. Recommended pairs would be established.

1. Fundamental English - 1 semester. This course would include the study of the eight parts of speech and their use in the sentence, punctuation, capitalization, spelling and some sentence structure.
2. Grammar and Usage - 1 semester. This course would be an in depth study of parts of speech, phrases, clauses, etc., in addition to usage and sentence structure.
3. Composition I - Elementary Composition - 1 semester. This course is designed to cover sentence structure and emphasis, spelling rules, punctuation and capitalization review, and some paragraphing.
4. Composition II - Intermediate Composition - 1 semester. This course is designed to teach essentially paragraphing and the five paragraph theme. It would also review briefly sentence structure and add vocabulary study.

5. Composition III - Advanced Composition - 1 semester. This course would include various theme organizations, structure, emphasis, vocabulary and other polishing techniques.
6. Practical English - 1 semester. This course would include letter writing, report writing, summaries, precis as well as elementary punctuation, spelling, capitalization and vocabulary study.
7. Research Paper and Critical Reviewing - 1 semester. This course would include the mechanics of writing research papers and critical reviews and the necessary writing skills to accomplish these.

According to test scores and ninth grade English teacher recommendation, students could start with Composition II and move to Composition III or they could take Grammar and Usage and move to Composition III according to their skill. Departments may want to structure lines of movement more strictly.

The reading classes in many schools are being handled by separate reading departments, however, the following classes might work as an English requirement.

1. Basic Reading - 1 semester (could be repeated). This class is for the slow reader who needs extensive help.
2. Reading Techniques - 1 semester. This course would be for the average or slightly below average reader who wants to increase his speed and comprehension.
3. Speed Reading - 1 semester. This course is for the average to good reader who wants to increase his speed and vocabulary.
4. College Prep Reading - 1 semester. This course is for the good reader who wants to increase his speed, reading level, comprehension, and vocabulary.

The literature courses are purposely brief because most departments already have classes similar to these in existence. The ½ credit requirement does not seem adequate but other literature classes could be offered on a rotating basis for students to select their final credit.

1. Basic Literary Study - nine weeks. This course would include a study of literary terminology and genre study with literature adaptable for slower students.
2. Elements of Literature - nine weeks. This course would include detailed study of literary terminology and genre study with some emphasis on critical reviewing.
3. Historical Literary Overview - one semester. This speed course would trace the major trends of each century of literature with accompanying study of one or two literary men from each century. Admittedly it is a crash course but it would provide a body of names and ideas for a majority of students.
4. American Literature - one semester. This course would include the material traditionally included in American literature courses.
5. English Literature - one semester. This course would be similar to the older traditional senior English course.
6. World Literature - one semester. This course again would include contents similar to the more traditional sophomore literature course.

In order to accommodate these selections, the rest of the elective courses would have to be cut into thirds perhaps and offered on a rotating basis. Care should be taken to make the difference between the courses definite and to avoid scheduling all writing classes in the fall and all electives in the spring. If teachers have too many writing classes they die from too many papers. If too many electives , they wilt under too many preparations.

Obviously this is not utopia. It is not an answer to the questions raised in this paper. What it hopefully provides is some time for society to consider its logic, its syllogisms before racing to the basics and erasing all other choices. I most sincerely hope that it works.

"THE BASICS" IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Ronald R. Butters, Duke University

The call for "the basics" has now penetrated the popular press: "By the time they /our students/ reach college, the professors complain, it is almost too late to help them. The breakdown in writing has been in the making for years, they say, and the causes for it . . . /include/ inadequate grounding in the basics of syntax, structure and style . . ." So says Merrill Sheils, "Why Johnny Can't Write," NEWSWEEK, December 8, 1975, p. 59.

Never mind that the "basics" of punctuation used to require a comma before the word <u>and</u> in a series such as "syntax, structure <u>and</u> style." Never mind that the most elementary rules of good writing prohibit breezy generalizations (p. 58: "If your children are attending college, the chances are that when they graduate they will be unable to write ordinary, expository English with any real degree of structure and lucidity") and naive, half-true, glib oversimplifications (p. 60: "Writing is far less important than speech, the structural linguists proclaim, because only about 4 percent of the world's languages have a written form"). Ms. Shiels is vague about what the "basics" are (though "diagraming sentences" is mentioned a lot in her article), but she is all for the "basics"--and against "the creative school," "structural linguists," and "find/ing/ ourselves back in Babel."

Whatever in the world is going on here? Ms. Shiels is responding to what is generally-acknowledged: American students today do not seem to be able to write as well as they could ten or fifteen years ago. Culprits, therefore, must be found--demons exorcized, wounds lanced--so that we can return to earlier years of "basic" purity.

In passing, it is perhaps worth pointing out that the usual causes to which the somewhat disturbing decline in student writing abilities is attributed are not unique to the 1970's. Our present college freshmen, for example, have probably watched no more television during their lives than had their counterparts ten or even fifteen years ago. Also, the influence of theoretical linguistics has been great for over a generation. "Creative writing" has likewise been with us for at least the twenty years since this writer was in high school; whether or not it is more pervasive today is subject for hard investigation. This is not to say that any decline in writing ability should not be viewed with alarm, nor that some of the explanation may not lie in, say, a decline in the number of words young people read per week, or in the number of argumentative essays that students are asked to write per semester--both of which, it seems clear, could affect writing quality. But how great the decline really is, and what the true causes may be, can really only be assessed by dispassionate, objective analysis, and not by hysterically charging back to "basics" which we do not define, and which, ironically, may never have been there in the first place.

I propose here, then, not a debate about the good old days of English education vs. the mechanized, Philistine, effete present, but rather, with respect to grammar, a discussion of what "the basics" might mean today--or rather, what one might hope the phrase means if our schools are to do their job properly.

Basics in grammar, first of all, should mean knowledge of a set of technical terminology which has been a part of education for centuries: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, relative clauses, etc. In addition, the fundamental grammatical processes of the language, technically known today as grammatical transformations, would seem "basic" by an reasonable definition. These are such processes as may for example define synonymy (<u>John saw the dog</u> = <u>The dog was seen by John</u> = <u>It was the</u>

ERIC

dog that John saw, etc.) and ambiguity (The lion turned on the girl). No one would dream of trying to teach chemistry without teaching the vocabulary of the elements and the processes by which they are compounded. No one would think of trying to teach carpentry without teaching the differences among types of woods, and among the various kinds of saws. So, too, are the technical aspects of grammar vital to the teaching of mechanics and style in writing.

If our schools are indeed not teaching basics in this sense with the insistence of thirty years ago, then reform is needed. Ms. Shiels implies in part that teachers, infected by the "creative school," have lately been interested mainly in entertaining students in the English class; since the nuts and bolts of English can be tedious, they are better off ignored, with the hope that students will somehow fill in with intuition. This is certainly an oversimplification, but to the extent that such an attitude may be current, it needs to be corrected. Creative writing certainly has a place in the secondary school curriculum, especially as a means of interesting students in writing at all. But it is not "basic" in the sense that grammar is. It certainly should not replace the rest of the curriculum.

Ms. Shiels' other villain, the "structural linguist," may also come in for some criticism here, though not for the reasons given in NEWSWEEK, and mostly not because the linguists were wrong, but because they have been misinterpreted by educationalists. American linguistics of the 1940's and 1950's, heavily anthropological in orientation, was faced with the task of writing grammars for very exotic languages with structures which, on the surface, seemed very different from each other, and from the Indo-European languages of our own grammatical heritage. Careful to meet each new culture on its own terms, anthropological linguists were in theory loath to use the traditional grammatical vocabulary originally developed to describe Greek and Latin. Indeed, some linguists (mistakenly, I believe) felt that vocabulary to be inadequate even for the description of English. Educators may therefore have erroneously concluded that linguists were saying that grammar itself was unimportant, and could safely be ignored.

Happily, current trends in linguistics lead directly away from such a conclusion. Transformational grammar, as developed in the work of Noam Chomsky and his followers, is firmly grounded in traditional grammar, and unabashedly incorporates traditional vocabulary--in contrast with the structuralist approach--while adding greatly to our knowledge of the syntactic structure of the language. One can no longer turn even mistakenly to linguists for support for the view that the study of grammar is unnecessary. This is not to say that the teaching of "basic" grammar will in and of itself somehow make students better writers. For one thing, there are other skills, such as organization and logic, which are also basic to good writing, but which have little or nothing to do with grammar. Rather, grammar affords the vocabulary for the discussion of such mechanical problems as punctuation, agreement, misplaced modifiers, etc., which students today seem to have such difficulty with. The same vocabulary, too, is important in teaching the elements of style. In addition, it should be noted, modern linguistics offers analysis of the sound structure of English which is of great help in teaching spelling.

But the basics in grammar must go beyond the level of mere facts about linguistic structure, important as the subject is. Students must come to understand, as a fundamental part of a grammatical education, the social meaning of grammar. Here, the insights of modern linguistics are of enormous importance--if, sadly, much misunderstood in the popular mind and the popular press. "Good" grammar, the linguist tells us, is relative. Standard American English in its written form is one dialect among many, each of which is valid within its own sphere, and most of which are of equal communicative power, given the vocabulary necessary. This is not what it is taken over and over to mean: that the student need not learn what is acceptable

ERIC

and unacceptable according to the standards of formal writing and speaking. The fact that Standard English is what it is is arbitrary, an historical accident; that does not make it unimportant. On the contrary, it is vital that students understand the social reality of dialect use; it is just that the linguist would have us tell them about the why as well as the what. Standard English does not permit the student to write He sick or He be sick, and it shows a preference against such constructions as The President wanted to know did the Russians lie. Speakers of many colloquial dialects of English, however, would find He is sick or even He's sick stiff and stilted (even as for all speakers does the pronunciation of the t in the phrase concepts seem seem artificial). And there are speakers for whom The President wanted to know whether the Russians lied or not is very foreign. The student needs to know both kinds of English, and it should make the distinctions easier to learn--and be less demeaning!--if the teacher also points out that both dialects have long and honorable histories, that the colloquial form may sometimes be more subtle than the Standard form (and vice versa), and that what is not possible in Standard English (He sick) is nonetheless required in Standard Russian.

It is true that there are those who would go farther, who see Standard English as a racist conspiracy, and who assert that everyone has a basic "right" to his own dialect in every possible circumstance. Such a view is correct only in the sense that we each have the right to go naked in every possible circumstance, or to speak Swedish in every possible circumstance--we can do it, but we must be willing to accept the inevitable social consequences. It is surely the duty of the teacher, as a part of basic English education, to make clear what the social consequences of various kinds of language will be. This seems just as true today for black students as it was for previous generations of, say, Swedes, or East European Jews.

Basics, then, in grammar should include traditional vocabulary, phrased as often as possible within the framework of modern grammatical (i.e. transformational) theory, and coupled with a fundamental grounding in the social uses of language. The temptation is overwhelming to add a third element to "basic" grammar: the teaching of modern linguistic theory for its own sake, divorced from the practical concern of improved writing. The student who takes chemistry may be a better cook for it; later, he or she may be a better doctor for it; still, in high school, chemistry (or any subject) must be taught in part as of interest in and of itself. The case of linguistics is no different. The student may communicate better as the result of studying linguistics; later, he or she may be a better anthropologist or psychologist or teacher for it; but, viewed in the light of the goals of liberal education--learning for its own sake--modern grammatical theory has much to offer. It is an exciting and rewarding pursuit in its own right. Our faculty of language is an intrinsic part of what it is that makes us human--that distinguishes us from other creatures. The study of linguistics, then, is surely "basic" in the profoundest of senses.

Are we teaching the basics? If our students are not being given the opportunity to study their language in the senses that I have described, then we are not. Academic and political fashions come and go, and sometimes in their extreme forms they obscure the fundamental truths. Still, one suspects that "basics" in grammar as outlined above have pretty much always been--and still are--the subject matter for most of us. An emotional trip back to basics that never existed, wiping out the advances that modern linguistic theory has afforded us, would be a sad and ironic blunder.

BASICS: A RE-DEFINITIQN

Lee Odell, State University of New York at Buffalo

It's really tempting to try to avoid discussions of basics. The term tends to come up in all sorts of unpleasant contexts, such as noisy schoolboard meetings where irate citizens insist that school taxes wouldn't have to be raised if only the schools would cut out the frills and nonsense and get back to teaching "basics." And besides, the notion is so, well, elementary. Every teacher, every methods text, has a definition. Basics means reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It means learning to spell and punctuate correctly and learning to distinguish between infer/imply and affect/effect. Basics means those things thatcan be labelled and measured so unambiguously that a cost accountant for the school board will agree that something really is going on in the classroom.

Each of these definitions has its uses, each helps meet increasing public demand that schools "return to teaching basics." But I would like to argue for a new understanding of the term, one that allows us to function in ways that are not possible with any of the definitions I've referred to. To get at this new understanding, consider ways teachers and prospective teachers tend to respond to the following short pieces of student writing from a tenth grade class that had been studying parliamentary procedure. Students were answering the "essay" exam question: "'Rule by the majority is not always best.' Tell whether you agree or disagree with this statement and why."

Damon: I agree because not always is majority vote best. Look at our 13 colonies that started from minority.

Twig: The majority is quite often wrong. Because the majority has more than 1/2 the people for them, they rule. Say out of 100 people 51 are for air pollution and 49 are against. So the air is polluted heavily and the 49 who voted against have to suffer because two more people wanted air pollution. This is an exaggeration, but it does prove majority rule is not always best.

Larry: a. I think the majoritty should rule but the rights of the mainority should be protected no matter what happens.
b. The majority rules, but the minority should have there say about the motion.
c. Also the rule by the majorty is best because that's what more pepol want, but you should protecte the minorty again.

Initial reaction to these three pieces is fairly predictable. Twig strikes many people as something of a smart aleck (his example is, after all, pretty far-fetched). People are generally annoyed by Damon's superficiality and are sometimes irritated, sometimes amused at Larry's failure to answer the question. In trying to explain their reactions, teachers begin to make a somewhat different sort of observation. They point out that Damon cites only a single, highly ambiguous piece of evidence in support of his point. Moreover, he assumes that his position is so obviously true that it needs no explanation. Twig, on the other hand, tries to justify his assertion by setting up an imaginary hypothetical situation and even acknowledges ("This is an exaggeration. . .") a possible weakness in his argument. Despite his listing of points a., b., and c., Larry takes no position at all. "X is true," he says in each of his three statements. "But Y is also true." He doesn't even use a subordinate conjunction (although X is true, Y is also true) which might emphasize and, hence, imply a preference for one of the two assertions.

In these comments, it seems to me, teachers are getting away from their own reaction to the boys and are beginning to talk about what the boys are doing intel-

ERIC

lectually, how their minds are working. It is, of course, dangerous to try to conclude too much from a single piece of writing. I use these three pieces because they do, in fact, epitomize the work of the three boys. In oral reports, other written work, even in conversations with classmates, Larry typically avoids taking a stand, especially if it means giving offense; as a rule, he equivocates, immediately backing away from any position that someone questions. Twig is nearly always much more venturesome. He customarily takes a very definite stand, which he often supports with hypothetical examples and is usually alert to weaknesses in his own or others' arguments. Damon frequently assumes that his observations are self-evidently true and that his audience is able (and willing) to fill in the necessary reasoning and information to make his comments seem valid.

My reading of work done by these three boys and a number of other students in public school and college leads me to make two assumptions:

1. We can make reasonable inferences about the way people's minds work when they use language; we can gain insight into some of the mental processes people use in formulating and expressing ideas and feelings.
2. These processes are important in every language act. They can guide one's efforts to write a poem, watch a movie, communicate with a friend, as well as one's attempt to read a novel or write an essay.

To pursue a re-definition of basics, I need to make three further assumptions:

1. If we are to try to improve the tenth graders' (or anyone's) ability to read or write or speak or listen, we will have to work not just on problems of decoding or encoding language but on the mental (cognitive and affective) processes that underly language.
2. These processes are the basics with which we ought to be concerned. Surface features of language (e.g., Larry's syntax and spelling) are subordinate to the processes that generate language. Unless students are making some use of the processes I shall describe in the rest of this paper, there is little chance that they will have anything to say that deserves careful punctuation or correct spelling. Their reading will likely be little more than phonetic decoding of a text.
3. A background in literature, which most of us have, does not prepare us to define these processes very rigorously. If we are to understand and use them effectively, we shall have to draw upon ideas from rhetoric, linguistics, and psychology.

Limitations of space make it impossible to accompany this re-definition with specific teaching suggestions. For practical applications of the theory I shall describe, see the annotated bibliography at the end of this article. My hope is that this article will provide theoretical coherence for a rich diversity of effective teaching practices that are now available.

For a long time, rhetoricians have felt that writing well requires us to be sure of what Wayne Booth calls our "rhetorical stance." That is, good writing is most likely to come about when the writer has a sense of his own identity or persona, thinks critically and imaginatively about this subject, and understands the audience he is addressing. Conventionally, rhetoricians have restricted their discussions of speaker, audience and subject to analyses of argumentative and expository prose. But in THE RHETORIC OF FICTION, Booth has shown that much prose fiction contains calculated, recognizable appeals to the reader/audience. And Stephen Dunning, in TEACHING LITERATURE TO ADOLESCENTS: POETRY, has argued that part of the effectiveness of some poems comes from the writer's ability to create a distinctive persona or voice.

With the encouragement implicit in Booth's and Dunning's arguments, we can go one step further: the concepts speaker, subject, and audience are basic to every languag-

ing situation. Whether we are reading a novel or play, writing an essay or a poem, talking to ourselves or a huge audience, listening to a song or a lecture, we are doing one of these things:

1. trying to understand the speaker, deciding what sort of person we are seeing/ hearing <u>or</u> (if we are the author) deciding what sort of persona we are/wish to create;
2. thinking about a subject (whether an abstract idea, an emotion, a brief sensation), trying to get our own thoughts straight, <u>or</u> trying to understand someone elses' thoughts;
3. understanding our audience, deciding what we can/can't assume about the people we're addressing, <u>or</u> trying to see what somebody else assumes about an audience.

This reference to rhetoric begins our re-definition of <u>basics</u>; it takes us beyond a specific use of language (a poem, a letter, a speech) and focuses our attention on processes which generate that language. But it doesn't go far enough. It doesn't tell us precisely what we need to do in order, say, to examine our ideas about a subject. It doesn't explain the processes that are involved in trying to understand or create a persona. To get at these, we shall have to draw upon the theory of linguist Kenneth Pike and psychologist Jean Piaget.

In his attempt to devise ways to think about language, Pike has described a set of processes that may be, in his words, some of the "characteristics of rationality itself." That is, he seems to have identified some of the things we do intellectually and emotionally when we "think." Pike does not claim to have described every mental process. Nor does he try to reduce the complexity of our minds to the neat sets of operations that enable us to solve, for example, simple math problems. Indeed, an important part of our thinking--call it inspiration, intuition, or whatever--may always be a mystery. But Pike does argue that when we think, we have to engage in several mental activities.

The first of these mental activities has to do with segmenting and focusing, activities that are apparent in almost any television program or motion picture. The film BLOW-UP provides a memorable example. Early in the movie, a photographer develops some pictures he has taken in a park near his home. He happens to notice that one of these pictures shows a small, unidentifiable but intriguing object. He blows-up the picture several times, each time focusing on a smaller and smaller segment of the entire scene. Finally, by magnifying a tiny portion of the original picture, he is able to see that the object is a human body, almost completely covered by leaves and bushes.

The photographer's ability to focus on a minute detail lets him perform several additional operations which Pike describes. Having zeroed in on one aspect of a scene, he is able to <u>contrast</u> the object, say what it is not. It is not a mannequin; it is nicely dressed and, hence, not the body of a vagrant; it appears to have been deliberately hidden, so it is probably not the body of a casual park visitor who suffered a stroke or accidental death. The photographer is also able to <u>classify</u> the body. Given the contrasts cited above, the labels "wealthy person" and "murder victim" come to mind. Moreover, the photographer can make certain observations about <u>change</u>--especially about those changes that, in this case, have not taken place. The body is not decomposed, clothes are still intact, the victim's watch and ring have not been removed. These observations lead to one further operation; they help locate <u>the body in a time sequence</u>. It can't have been there long; otherwise it would have changed drastically.

The photographer's close examination of his picture gives him enough information

to go to the police. But before he can do so, his studio is burglarized and all his pictures are stolen--all except the one blow-up of the tiny detail from the original. On the basis of this one picture, he can perform almost all the operations Pike discusses. He can classify the object, say how it differs from roughly comparable items, locate it in a time sequence, and note the extent to which it has and has not changed. But there is one operation he cannot perform. He can't locate the picture in a physical context. With only one detail, he can't prove that the body appeared where he said it did, and, for purposes of a police investigation, the previous observations become useless. (Of course, when the photographer returns to the park to verify his discovery, the body is gone.)

This very brief discussion of Pike's theory helps solve the problem I mentioned earlier; it lets us identify some of the knowable mental operations that constitute thinking. But there is one further problem; the theory described thus far provides no sense of direction, gives us no way to make value judgments about the way people engage in the activity suggested by rhetoric and by Pike's theory. The following letter to a newspaper illustrates this problem.

> To the University of Michigan--so call Student body.
> What, if I may ask as a tax payer and a person who pays taxes to support a bunch of Hoods, beer slops, punks, and you name it U. of M. has it including the commie Profs.
> I put (3) three sons through college and not one is a bunch of pigs like you birds. . .(rather, they are) men with good honest jobs, homes, and families. If even one of my son's had come home and said he was going to burn his draft card, I would have took him apart piece by piece, then stick him back together and he would have been glad to enlist then, and I would not have cared if he ever came back.

Without seeming too much like sophists, we can argue that this letter is in some ways a very effective bit of language. The writer has created a very distinct persona. And he apparently has used some of the operations Pike describes: he contrasts his sons with his readers (not one is a bunch of pigs like you birds); he classifies them (men with good honest jobs, homes and families); and he hypothesizes a sequence of events that would follow if one of his sons burned his draft card. But insofar as this letter really does reflect the way the writer's mind works, it would be hard to argue that this man can function well--define well as you wish: humanely, analytically, imaginatively--in many language situations. He is unable (unwilling?) to do several things that would allow him to understand others' language or express himself very fully.

For one thing, perhaps because he focuses so extensively on himself, he doesn't consider, let alone try to think from, other people's perspectives; he makes no references to his son's possible thoughts, feelings, or values as he explains what he would do if one of his sons burned a draft card. I seriously doubt that he could think and act (e.g., role play) from the perspective of someone significantly different from himself. Consequently, I suspect that he can "hear" only a very limited range of voices; whether he's reading a story, watching a movie or television program, listening to a speech, there may be a lot that just doesn't make sense--partly because he doesn't seem able to understand a perspective different from his own. Moreover, when he speaks--or, less frequently, writes--he can assume only a very limited number of voices, he can only create one kind of persona.

Second, he has trouble looking beyond the immediate physical circumstances in which he finds himself; he has difficulty projecting himself into unfamiliar circumstances, whether factual or hypothetical. He does hypothesize one sequence of events: "If even one of my son's had come home and said he was going to burn his draft card . . ." But his hypothetical anger at his sons is prompted by a single physical act,

burning a draft card. The writer does not consider what series of events or what sets of values might have led up to the act and made it comprehensible if not admirable.

Third, he severely limits his use of the operations Pike describes. He does point out contrasts, but only one kind: the contrasts between what he values and what is or might be going on in the University community. Certain kinds of contrasts, (potential differences among professors, among his sons, between his sons and himself) simply are not considered. And when he fantasizes a sequence of events (". . .I would have took him apart piece by piece. . .") he creates only one kind of sequence; he does not (cannot? is afraid to?) speculate as to alternative courses of action.

Finally, he doesn't attempt to examine and justify his reactions. Apparently there is just one way to think and feel--his way--and it is absolutely right. Thus he doesn't need to defend his argument or look for limitations, incongruities within it. In this he reminds me of some sixth graders talking about advertising. When asked to describe their favorite TV commercials they did so with considerable enthusiasm. But when asked why they liked those commercials, they foundered: "Because they're good." "Well, why are they good?" "Because they are, that's all." Same problem with the commercials they didn't like. "Why don't you like them?" "Because they 'icky.'" "Why do you say they're icky?" Annoyed silence. They had no idea of how they could justify their value judgments. Indeed, some seemed to have the idea that they were simply reporting fact, not asserting a debatable point.

I have spent so much time on the letter writer, because he helps explain the theory that will provide the sense of direction I mentioned earlier. He is a perfect example of what Piaget refers to as egocentric behavior. Piaget, of course, is talking about the way infants and children behave while they're still pretty much the center of their universe, before they've had to encounter the fact that the world contains others with significantly different views and needs that must somehow be accommodated. For Piaget, the process of development is one of decentering, i.e., learning to do some of the things the letter writer doesn't do. One grows intellectually and emotionally as he learns to think from different perspectives and examine his own ideas and feelings. Piaget doesn't claim that anyone could become completely decentered. Nor does he preclude the possibility that one might choose to adopt an egocentric attitude for some specific purpose. But his theory does help identify some of the qualities of mature thought and, consequently, completes my re-definition of basics. To speak, listen, read, or compose effectively, one must have certain basic abilities. One must be able to:

1. Perform certain rhetorical acts, i.e.,
   a. create a persona and understand the persona that someone else (a poet, a friend, a film maker, an essayist) has created;
   b. appeal to an audience (whether through visual images, spoken language, non-verbal language, or written language) and understand the audience appeals other people create;
   c. think critically and imaginatively about a subject and understand others' efforts to think about a subject;
2. Use the intellectual strategies described by Pike in performing these activities;
3. Learn to use these strategies in an increasingly decentered way.

My argument is that reading, writing, listening, and speaking are not the basics of a language arts program or of the languaging process. They are manifestations of a set of intellectual processes described by Booth, Pike, and Piaget. These processes are the basics that students must master. Specific language arts assignments are means of working toward that mastery.

Early in this article, I claimed that a re-definition of basics would let English

teachers do some things that current definitions do not. Before trying to make good on this claim, I have to acknowledge something that my re-definition does not seem to do. It does not appear to speak to the present concern with syntax, mechanics, usage--all the diverse topics that are often lumped under the widely but carelessly used term grammar. For some readers--especially those of my generation, whose high school instruction in English consisted largely of the study of grammar--this appearance may be a major problem. It may seem as though I am saying grammar is unimportant. That is not my intent. At the late stages of the composing process, after we have carefully worked out our "rhetorical stance," attention to "grammar " can help us make sure our ideas about a subject are not obscured by ineptitude, that the features of written language enhance rather than undermine the speaker-audience relation we are trying to establish. But I do mean to argue that conscious knowledge of the rules and terminology of grammar is not basic. It does not help students engage in the intellectual and emotional processes that are prerequisite to effective, mature communication.

If we see our primary goal as helping students improve their ability to use these processes, both we and our students benefit in several ways. First, we can unify the diverse activities of the English classroom. In place of treating film, poetry, and essay writing as entirely separate, unrelated subjects, we help students see, for example, how the notion of persona applies to each medium. And we can help students grasp the uniqueness of various media as they see each medium using contrast, etc., in slightly different ways to create a persona, appeal to an audience, or examine a subject.

Second, the re-definition I'm proposing will help us to find some unity in what appears to be chaotic diversity. To see what I mean here, consider one more letter, this one written by the central character in John Marquand's novel THE LATE GEORGE APLEY:

> Dear John: I suppose a father always writes advice to his son upon the important moment of his entering college and I am no exception. A large part of your future life will be influenced by what you do this next year. The habits and ties you form will be with you always. At least, they have been with me, and I want you to do the right thing. There is a great deal of talk about democracy. I thought there was something in it once but now I am not so sure. You cannot be too careful to select friends who have the same bringing-up as your own, and I want your friends to be my friends. You must bring them around to Beacon Street as much as possible on Saturdays and Sundays. Besides helping yourself, this will also be a great help to Eleanor and I am sure we can all enjoy ourselves a great deal.
>
> Sometimes it seems to me that you are reticent in talking to your parents. You are making a great mistake, John, for I really think that I could be a good deal of help to you. I am still quite well-known around the Club, you know, and your first object must be to "make" the Club. I believe that everything else, even including your studies, should be secondary to this. You may call this a piece of worldly counsel but it is worth while. I don't know what I should have done in life without the club. When I leave Boston it is my shield. When I am in Boston it is one of my great diversions. The best people are always in it, the sort that you will understand and like. I once tried to understand a number of other people, but I am not so sure now that it was not a waste of time. Your own sort are the best friends and you will do well not to forget it.

At first glance, George Apley appears to have absolutely nothing in common with our "taxpayer and a person who pays taxes." His syntax is not garbled, he doesn't use slang, he doesn't make mechanical errors. But in important ways George is very much like the taxpayer: he divides the world into two distinct groups (those who belong to the club and those who don't); he virtually ignores his son's feelings, interests, values; he tries to resolve a complex problem (the son's attempt to decide how he will act, what his values will be) through a relatively simple overt act: he seems to assume that his pronouncement of his values will end the problem.

In almost any class of thirty students we will find differences at least as profound as those between George and the taxpayer. Yet, by identifying the mental processes that underly specific uses of language, we can find similarities where none had appeared and set up goals which will be equally valid for different individuals.

Finally, by re-defining basics in the way I have suggested, we can meet a fundamental obligation to our students, to concerned citizens who attend school board meetings, and to ourselves. No matter what people read, they need to be able to understand how a writer is treating his or her subject. No matter what people compose--or what medium they compose in--they must be able to consider what their audience will need to know or experience in order to comprehend a message. No matter what sort of discussion people have, they need to be sensitive to the sort of persona they are projecting. Given these needs, our re-definition seems especially important since it lets us relate the study of English to what goes on in the rest of students' lives; in place of learning skills that seem to pertain solely to the reading of, say, poetry, students will be learning operations that they have to use all the time, in every languaging situation. We will, in short, be able to get away from the narrow, simple-minded pursuit of relevance that leads us to assimilate every passing fad into our classes. We can be relevant in the most profound sense: we will contribute to students' ability to use language effectively--not only in the English classroom but in every area of their experience. And we just might contribute to our own sense of well-being the next time we have to sit through a noisy school board meeting.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Charles R. Cooper, "A Dramatic Writing Sequence for Grades 7 and 8," Department of Instruction, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York 14214. Mimeograph, 20 pages. A series of specific writing tasks--developed by classroom teachers--which help students learn to adopt different personae and appeal to different audiences in their writing.

Walter Gibson, PERSONA, NY: Random House, 1969. Some theory about rhetoric and specific examples of assignments based on that theory.

James Moffett (ed.), INTERACTION, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973. An extensive collection of activities and reading materials, all of which help students become more decentered in reading, writing, talking, listening.

James Moffett, A STUDENT-CENTERED LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM, K-13, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968. Contains a detailed description of a sequence of composing activities that serve as the basis for a Language Arts program.

Lee Odell and Joanne Cohick, "Focus: The Process of Seeing and the Process of Composing," PROCEEDINGS of the First Annual Language Arts Conference, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1975. This article and the following article describe specific ways to help students use focus in their reading and in their composing.

Lee Odell and Joanne Cohick, "Writing about Literature: Eighth Graders Encounter 'The Ransom of Red Chief,'" in CLASSROOM PRACTICES, Ouida Clapp (ed.), Urbana: NCTE, 1975.

Lee Odell and Joanne Cohick, "'You Mean, Write it Over in Ink?'" ENGLISH JOURNAL, December 1975. A detailed explanation of a unit of study in which ninth graders were taught to revise their writing by using intellectual strategies described by Kenneth Pike.

Sidney B. Simon, et al, VALUES CLARIFICATION, NY: Hart Publishing Company, 1972. A large number of classroom activities that, without advocating a specific set of values, engage students in examining their own values and attitudes.

Gene Stanford and Albert E. Roark, HUMAN INTERACTION IN EDUCATION, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974. An explanation of theory and classroom activities that can help students learn to talk and listen to each other in increasingly mature ways.

HUMANITIES -- BASIC TO TOTAL EDUCATION

Martha P. Brincklow, Dunedin High School, Dunedin, Florida

"BACK TO THE BASICS!" With more and more emphasis the drive is on for school systems to stress the teaching of skills in the language arts. Community leaders and legislative forces demand that educators implement plans to further student achievement in the verbal areas -- reading and writing -- and to emphasize their promotion in the curriculum. Educators, too, are well aware of the growing deficiencies in verbal achievement and are seeking ways to counteract the weakness in these areas. However, at the same time, it is important that both educators and community leaders encourage development in other areas which are basic to student needs, areas that are just as important in the total development of the student -- the knowledge of content in the areas of general and particular interest and the strategies that aid the student in developing his own value system, assist him in setting his own goals, and help him observe relationships between these and the contemporary world.

In determining the areas of study which are basic to the curriculum, one should include interdisciplinary humanities, a course that is essentially as important as the development of the skills of reading, writing, and mathematics in the total program. The study of humanities promotes sequential progress in exposing the student to areas of awareness which sharpen his sense responses, harness these sensitivities, and help establish ways of exploring values in the world he knows and will know throughout his life. This necessitates skill development in non-verbal communication as well as extension and reinforcement of the verbal proficiencies. It is through the humanities that one can teach the universal values conducive to man's survival, can examine solutions to his crises, can explore the creative and imaginative efforts that reflect all facets of life, and can enable the student to become aware of his own worth as an individual. It is through the study of humanities that all can examine the lifestyles, events, and efforts of yesterday as well as those of today from a variety of civilizations and cultures. It is the one area of the curriculum that deals with interrelated, unfragmented knowledge and helps develop a total concept of man's endeavors.

Ideally, the curriculum should provide experiences in humanities from the kindergarten upward so that sequential growth in awareness can occur. However, in practice this has not consistently materialized. Most high school students seem devoid of this previous experience. Most of them have not seen relationships of some subject areas to other subject areas. Most of them parrot back information, not weighing or balancing ideas from an individual point of view or voicing curiosities about facts learned. They are equipped with fragmentary knowledge, ranging from small to explosive amounts, but are unable to see the interrelationship between these fragments or the relationship of these to themselves as individuals or to contemporary society. Our emphasis on semester or year coverage of subject matter has produced fragmentary learning. It also has left an emphasis on content rather than related meaning. Even those on the highest levels of achievement, proficient in concentrated areas, may be disadvantaged in relating to other areas of man's endeavors. It is in the area of interdisciplinary humanities that these relationships may be developed.

This fragmentation can be rectified in a course that combines many disciplines, emphasizing these as ways in which man shows his development as a human being and demonstrating their power as a means of the communication of man's thoughts and accomplishments. In such a course the student not only is exposed to the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication that reveal our cultural heritage but also is involved in activities which help him understand ideas and facts of the world culture as it relates to society and to himself. In order to do this, one must create an atmosphere in which students can internalize ideas and can have the opportunity to explore freely the results of man's creative prowess.

ERIC

At this point one needs to define humanities as an interdisciplinary study in order to explain it as basic to the curriculum. Participation in activities usually associated with the term humanities -- literature, painting, sculpture, music, drama, and the dance -- heighten the experience and develop the talent of the student or make him more aware of the nature of these specific arts, according to the objectives of both student and teacher. Specifically designed individual courses for this purpose answer this need and are indeed each a contribution toward fulfilling the goals of a total humanities program. However, an interdisciplinary humanities course can go beyond this. It does not attempt to develop proficient skills of performance in any of these areas, nor require specific talent in any art form, although direct experience with any or all of these areas may contribute to the overall objectives. Its focus is to look at every phase of man's endeavor as a human being -- written, oral, musical, scientific, economic, social, philosophical, and religious -- and to study the creative work from any of these areas, using the art form itself to give the message. In addition, its focus is also to search for direct interrelationships among them as one examines the art forms of past and present periods. When, in humanities, this activity leads to the student's own expressive response so that the experience has been internalized, then one begins to see a webb of interrelated ideas emerging. In encouraging the student to react creatively by responding in a variety of art forms, thus broadening the scope of ways to express ideas, one assists each student in understanding another man's efforts and in increasing his own initiative. Often this opens up new worlds to explore.

There are various approaches in achieving these goals. The content of each unit suggests the type of approach that is feasible. However, basic to each approach, most interdisciplinary humanities courses will include the study of a wide range of art forms, and in responding each student will have the opportunity to employ verbal skills in addition to the newly-developed skills of non-verbal communication. Another dimension can therefore be added to increase opportunities for the student. Instead of treating the arts as fringe benefits, the interdisciplinary approach can bring enriched meaning of life to the individual student and teacher.

In practice, when these ideals are implemented successfully, they emanate from a variety of activities and approaches that supply basic needs for student development. Skills in gaining insight from art forms must be learned and developed just as skills in utilizing verbal language or mathematics need mastery. Every discipline has its own set of symbols to be learned. Through the study of art forms, the student begins to witness something of the artist as a man and to see reflections of the period in which the artist lived. He is exposed to the techniques employed in painting, sculpture, architecture, drama, poetry, music, photography, and the dance. After responding on an emotional level, he can move to an intellectual level, noting elements, composition, and focus. For example, he learns the elements used in the analysis of painting, such as line, color, form, space, texture, and materials, which assist him in evaluating painting and other visual arts. He also realizes that the way or techniques of the artist in utilizing these elements produces the art form which provides the stimulus for response. It is the artist's purpose and motivation that predict his style. If he, the student, can respond by employing his own creativity in expressing a parallel or analagous situation that he recognizes, he, too, sharpens his imagination. In working with students, one can provide a criterion for aesthetics, but permit the student to respond with an individual value system. As an individual, he must know that he has the right to carry out his response by using this personal value system. For many in our schools, it would be the first opportunity in which no right or wrong answer would be expected, but a situation in which a response was fortified by application of an individual value scale to it.

Often this opportunity to respond enhances the student's awareness of the world around him. Recently, after the study of contemporary art forms which reflected the

desire of the artists to shock in order to inform society of its inadequacies, individuals of one group produced multi-media responses, focusing on current problems of society -- power shortages, inflation, ecology, isolation, war and destruction, among others. One outstanding project, composed of a small, painted, metal box, complete with eyes, gaping mouth and computer wires (to represent the machine), and arranged on computer print-out sheets with small, de-humanized figures of wire and paper attached throughout, expressed the fate of man in our technological society. The student's multi-media project spoke for itself, but the written explanation which accompanied it gave the depth with which he had pursued his goals of expression. The projects submitted by all intensified awareness of either personal or social problems, allowing each to state unspoken ideas and feelings. Thus, each student not only became aware of world situations, conditions he felt in the world outside of school, but actively in a first-hand experience, each produced an art form which broadcast that condition.

Often, if no previous opportunity has existed, a student who has not examined the use of a variety of media in creative work will be limited in his response. Many do not see nuances of intensity and value and cannot identify the hues of color. For these, the experience of making a color wheel may aid understanding as the hues, tints, shades, and intensities emerge from the mixing of the primaries, black and white. Actual experience enhances understanding, not only in the visual arts but also in all other forms of artistic expression. No other course in the curriculum has the opportunity to give hands-on experience in so many varied areas, if the occasion warrants.

Interdisciplinary humanities can be involved with student focus on his immediate world. It can also combine both past and present to aid the student in assessing values and comparing his own ideas with those of others. Part of the program can advantageously focus on past lifestyles. Its key to success lies in examining highly selective examples, which speak for those skillful, prominent artists, musicians, writers, and philosophers of any age as they reflect their eras, and by examining the lifestyles of the periods in all areas of endeavor. Drawing parallels between these and the present can point up both the strengths and weaknesses of mankind, explain our heritage, and deepen the understanding of man's nature.

With emphasis placed on the examination and study of the object or writing produced by man's creativity, the student can begin with man's verbal responses, the reflection of his thoughts and ideas as they are expressed in essays, dramas, and poetry and extend the knowledge found there by examining the thoughts and ideas expressed in non-verbal communication. Artists, sensitive to their times, often are the first to convey the Zeitgeist of their age. Their efforts form a statement of each period, and the skillful teacher can relate all of these within an historical framework to show continuity and progress.

Aware of the increasing influence of world cultures on American lifestyles, humanities leaders have extended units to include the study of values from many cultures in addition to our Western heritage -- Eastern, African, and Pre-Columbian. Basic to the education of the contemporary student is the need to understand these influences on his life. Exploring different lifestyles, studying comparative religious views, promoting self-inquiry into the nature of man, and observing the relationship of these with increased understanding can fortify the student and help him further his own search for meaning.

Humanities is basic to the curriculum because it speaks of man's needs, his desires, and his attainments. It provides a framework of inquiry so that each student may develop and satisfy his own quest for knowledge and understanding of life,

establishing a pattern by which he can assess his own values to gain answers to the universal questions. It is basic to the curriculum in the way it teaches the use of verbal as well as non-verbal skills in expressing ideas. It gives the student the opportunity to see the power of creativity from a few brush strokes, a musical phrase, and expressive words to the creative imagination of the nuclear age. Humanities gives the student support for developing an individual value system and a means to evaluate situations in this century of constant change.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

Peter Drucker argues that ". . .the school is not in crisis just because it is suddenly doing worse. Today's school does no poorer a job than it did yesterday; the school has simply done a terribly poor job all along. But what we tolerated in the past we no longer can tolerate." Drucker suggests that American schools have been unhappily based on certain assumptions. "1) learning is a separate and distinct 'intellectual' activity; 2) learning goes on in a separate organ, the mind, divorced from the body or the emotions; 3) learning is divorced from doing--indeed opposed to it; at best it is preparation for doing; and 4) learning, because it is preparation, is for the young." He then proposes eight ideas which must be typical of the school of tomorrow. "(1) Tomorrow's school will have no rejects: it must guarantee every child a high minimum of accomplishment in fundamental skills. . . (2) The schools must utilize the individual's own rhythm, his own learning speed, his own pattern. . . (3) The traditional school is labor-intensive; it has neither tools nor capital equipment. . .American education tomorrow will require a great deal more by way of tools than we have had. (4) Today's school is still the school of arrogance, contemptuous of whatever is not reading, writing, or arithmetic. And yet one look should show us a world in which verbal skills are not the only productive ones. They are necessary--a foundation. But the purely verbal skills are not necessarily the central performance skill when electronic media carry the main information load. People are endowed differently in different areas, but today's school dismisses three quarters of human endowments as irrelevant. This is inhuman and stupid. It is also incompatible with the realities of our economy and our society. We need craftsmen in thousands of areas; everywhere we need people with excellence in one area--and not necessarily a verbal one. We will expect the school to find the individual's real strength, challenge it, and make it productive. (5) The school of tomorrow will be neither behavioristic nor cognitive, neither child-centered nor discipline-centered. It will be all of these. . . (6) While it is moving out of the Middle Ages academically, tomorrow's school also must integrate itself into the community and become an integrator of the community. . . I do not advocate a return to what we had a century ago. But we must bring the community back into the school. American education will have to think through who its constituents are and get across to them--students, teachers, taxpayers, parents, alumni and prospective employers--what they can expect from the school, and also what the school can expect of them. (7) One way or another education will become accountable for performance. I do not know how one measures performance in educators. First you have to know what the objectives and goals are. If the first job of an elementary school is to have the children learn to read, one can measure performance easily. But if the school at the same time is also to socialize, to make civilized human beings out of children, to develop the whole person--prepare him for work and life--then no one can measure performance. . . (8) Finally, and most important, American education must acknowledge that learning is lifelong--it does not stop when one starts working. The most important learning, the most important true education, is the continuing education of educated, achieving adults." ("School Around the Bend," PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, June 1972, pp. 49-51, 86, 89)

HE WHO CAN DOES--HE WHO CANNOT TESTS

Joseph Mersand, York College of City University of New York

There was a time when the subject of testing was hardly mentioned in the daily newspapers. Of course, to us teachers it was always a felt presence; to students and parents it assumed significance at the middle or the end of the term when final grades were frequently based upon performance in tests. But in recent months tests have made the front page headlines.

As recently as Monday, February 3, 1975, the prestigious NEW YORK TIMES on page 9 (not bad for a story about a test) carried the story about the newly appointed Japanese Education Minister, Michio Nagai, who attacked the present testing system in Japan, not least because it relied too much upon objective tests, which may have tested specific facts but did little to evaluate higher processes of thought. In the February 1975 issue of LEARNING IN NEW YORK CITY, the publication of the Board of Education of the City of New York, a leading story is headlined "Reading Tests Made More Secure," a story dealing with stricter security for administering the system-wide reading tests in April 1975. Apparently some peculiar results were obtained in the reading test of April 1974, which led the authorities to question the test's reliability and which led the administration in some schools to alternative forms of the tests.

Finally, there was the wide consternation in New York state by millions of high school students, their parents, their teachers, and school administrators when it was discovered that in one school several students had stolen the answers to a number of Regents Examinations, had duplicated them, and were peddling them all over the state for enormous sums. In some instances it was possible to hurriedly prepare new examinations. But in most cases, students throughout the state were excused from taking Regents Examinations and their teachers were instructed to base their students' final grades on the entire term's work. (See the NEW YORK TIMES for several days from June 15th-25th, 1974, passim. Other newspapers like the DAILY NEWS, THE NEW YORK POST and the LONG ISLAND PRESS, made a field day of this episode in misguided students' business enterprise.)

For once, tests assumed positions on the front pages of reliable newspapers all over New York state, usually reserved for the latest sordid murder, the latest confession or denial about Watergate, and the nefarious upscaling of the price of oil and oil products because of OPEC's callous indifference to world opinion.

Willy-nilly, those of us in the teaching profession must be test-conscious, whether we know what we are testing or not. We usually begin our school year with a diagnostic test which unhappily too often reveals how much our students have forgotten during the summer; we usually conclude our term in June by an end-term test which--again unhappily--reveals how little many of them have learned despite our best efforts! What can we do about this distressing situation? Is it possible that the fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars, but in our tests?

I propose in this paper to offer some solace and assistance to my fellow English teachers based on a teaching career that now perilously approaches the half-century mark and a supervisory career that spanned almost three decades. If even a clear distinction is perceived concerning the difference between testing and evaluation results--and nothing else--even that will be worth the time consumed in reading further. And we trust that much more will result.

A very succinct but clear distinction between testing and evaluation is drawn by Helen Heffernan.

ERIC

Testing is limited to the quantitative aspects of evaluation. Evaluation includes, in addition, the qualitiative aspect. Good instruments of evaluation should help us to determine more than what the child is doing to his school work; they should help us to discover what the school program is doing to the child. To make a test is comparatively easy, as compared to establishing a complete evaluation program. ("Evaluation--More Than Teaching," in TESTING AND EVALUATION, a series of articles reprinted from the April 1958 issue of the NEA JOURNAL)

A more recent definition of evaluation is given by Loban, Ryan and Squire.

True evaluation includes all desired competencies not just a few. It concerns the really significant changes in pupil behavior, changes that are major objectives in teaching. Thus evaluation is much more comprehensive than testing or measurement. It is a continuous process, descriptive as well as quantitative, a comprehensive gathering of evidence on the attainment of significant objectives. (Walter Loban, Margaret Ryan, James R. Squire, TEACHING LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: GRADES SEVEN-TWELVE, 2nd edition, NY: Harcourt, 1969, p. 209)

Just what evaluation is supposed to accomplish was well spelled out as far back as twenty-five years ago in THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, a publication of the Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English. The following purposes of an evaluation program were listed:

1. Identifies the needs of the learner
2. Provides important information for use in guidance
3. Stimulates self-direction
4. Aids in planning and replanning the language arts curriculum
5. Provides a record of growth and development for learners, instructors, and parents (NY: Appleton, 1952, pp. 417-440)

As will be seen, such aims cannot be achieved by dashing off a 20-item true-false test in a few moments between class sessions. The intricacies involved in evaluating the outcomes of instruction in English can be seen as the teacher studies such a classic volume as Dora V. Smith's EVALUATING INSTRUCTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH (English Monograph, No. 11, Champaign, Illinois: NCTE, 1941) in which she reported her findings in New York State. Many of the principles and methods employed in this survey have significance today and will continue to be meaningful for a long time.

There are, of course, good and bad evaluation programs; the elements of a good evaluation program in English are spelled out by DeBoer, Kaulfers, and Miller in their textbook, TEACHING SECONDARY ENGLISH. They ask about the evaluation program the following questions:

1. Does the evaluation program include measurement of the extent to which the offerings in English are compatible with the needs and abilities of the students?
2. Does the evaluation program include adequate means for individual diagnosis of pupils' needs and difficulties?
3. Does the evaluation program provide for a cumulative record that can be passed on from teacher to teacher as the student progresses through school?
4. Does the evaluation program include tests of special abilities, such as spelling, vocabulary, or usage, as diagnostic instruments to assist in locating possible causes of difficulties in using language for purposes of communication?
5. Does the evaluation program include appraisal of outcomes in the way of reading interests, speech habits (including usage outside of the English class), insights into human relations through literature, and other traits or qualifications cited as objectives of the course of study?
6. Does the program stress pupil participation in self-evaluation?
7. Does the evaluation program de-emphasize grades as ends in themselves?

ERIC

8. Is the evaluation program appropriately differentiated to accommodate terminal as well as college-preparatory students? (John J. DeBoer, Walter V. Kaulfers, Helen Rand Miller, TEACHING SECONDARY ENGLISH, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1951, pp. 405-408)

DeBoer, Kaulfers, and Miller wrote a quarter of a century ago. A more recent set of textbook authors, Walter Loban, Margaret Ryan and James R. Squire, bring the concept of evaluation in English up-to-date when they state:

> Everyone agrees that evaluation deeply influences teaching, learning, and curriculum. If evaluation concentrates on narrow specifics, then narrow specifics are what pupils learn, what teachers teach. If evaluation stresses a broader profile of characteristics and statements such as creative thinking or problem solving, then pupils and teachers will emphasize those attainments. Inevitably the curriculum shrinks or expands to the boundaries of evaluation. In anything so crucial it is important to distinguish evaluation from testing and measurement. (p. 209)

An excellent discussion of the relationship existing between teaching and testing and of the various levels of testing is found in Edward J. Gordon's stimulating article, "Levels of Teaching and Testing." To Gordon there are five different levels of testing:

1. To remember a fact
2. To provide a generalization someone else has made
3. To make one's own evaluation
4. To generalize from the book to its application in life
5. To carry over the generalization into one's own behavior (ENGLISH JOURNAL, September 1955, pp. 330-342)

Lest anyone have the foolish notion that preparing a valid test is a simple matter, the words of Sherman N. Tinkelman in his superb pamphlet, IMPROVING THE CLASSROOM TEST, should be taken to heart:

> Before a single test question is written, therefore, the teacher should have clearly in mind what purpose the test is to serve, what skills and content area are to be measured and their relative weights should be. To ignore these factors at the outset in preparing a test is to court the danger that the test, if it constitutes a poor sample of questions, may provide a misleading picture of pupil progress. (Albany, NY: State Education Department, 1957, and later revisions. See also Robert B. Carruthers, BUILDING BETTER ENGLISH TESTS, Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1963)

Inspired by the authorities listed above, and many others, and eager to prepare better tests, the teacher is now ready, willing and (possibly?) able to begin his/her own testing program. How to begin:

PREPARING A CLASSROOM TEST

Soon after the beginning or experienced teachers start the new term, they will think of tests. In order to know where the class as a whole and each student stands as far as skills and knowledge are concerned, they will plan a diagnostic test or series of them. The summer vacation is a good time for forgetting much that has been learned in the preceding year. Students may be coming from lower schools in the same district or they may have transferred from other areas. Mobility is a constant factor in education today.

What can be learned from these diagnostic tests? Reading skills, spelling skills, and grammatical knowledge can be diagnosed by objective, short-answer tests. Skill in written composition can be estimated to some extent by the first composition of the term. Other aspects of the English program such as appreciation of literature, attitudes toward languages, etc. are more difficult to perceive in a diagnostic test.

Later in the term teachers will be interested in ascertaining the achievement of students, and here again tests will be used. The end of the term is frequently another occasion for either a composite test (the final examination) or a series of shorter tests. The information obtained through these tests can be very valuable if the tests are properly constructed. They may indicate growth in language power. They may lead teachers to change their methods. They may lead to individual counseling of students when this is indicated. Above all, tests should not be just a means of getting a grade for purposes of promotion or retention in the same grade.

A word of caution lest overzealous teachers expect more from tests than they can possibly reveal comes from the above-mentioned Loban, Ryan and Squire:

> Tests and measurements concentrate on specific, well-defined skills. They have their niche, but what can be tested or measured is by no means the same as what is important to teach (underline mine). Paper and pencil testing has a highly limited scope. It serves to measure knowledge of spelling and punctuation, but fails to cope with power over the spoken word, appreciation of literature, and appropriateness of written style. (p. 209)

Theodore W. Hipple in a recent English methods book, TEACHING ENGLISH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS has some words of good advice to makers of tests:

1. It should provide students taking it an opportunity to learn from taking the test.
2. It should be reliably scored.
3. It should permit all students to have at least some chance for success.
4. It should reflect a broad coverage of whatever it is supposed to test.
5. It should be brief enough to be completed by most of the students in the time allotted for it.
6. It should be announced early enough to permit review and study by the student preparing for it.
7. It should reflect student interests. (Theodore W. Hipple, TEACHING ENGLISH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, NY: Macmillan, 1973, pp. 289-290. See also Paul B. Diedrich, "Making and Using Tests," ENGLISH JOURNAL, March 1955, pp. 135-151)

TYPES OF TESTS

Basically tests today are of two types: the essay and the objective type (short answer). Much controversy has taken place for the past fifty years about the relative merits of each type. For many years the essay type was popular in our secondary schools. Then came the great interest in measurement and in testing in the 1920's. Objective-type tests were prepared and marketed, and whole libraries were written defending or attacking these short answer tests. In the 1960's and 1970's there was renewed interest in the essay test, particularly as a gauge of accomplishment in written English. The controversy will continue because of several factors, not the least of which is the time consumed in marking essay questions and the subjective element always present.

Essay Questions

Of the values of the essay question, Tinkelman says,

> The fundamental contribution of the essay question is that it requires the pupil to develop an answer from his own background and fund of experience without benefit of suggested possibilities or alternatives, and to express that answer in his own words.
>
> By requiring pupils to present evidence, to evaluate, to analyze, and to solve problems or approach problems in a new way, essay questions can serve to measure some higher level abilities and thus contribute to knowledge about the pupil.

A more recent explanation of the demands of a good essay test is given by Mary Elizabeth Fowler in her TEACHING LANGUAGE, COMPOSITION AND LITERATURE:

ERIC

1. The ability to abstract information from reading and to discriminate between important and unimportant details.
2. The ability to organize knowledge into a clearly developed answer.
3. The ability to make valid judgments, generalizations, and to support them with concrete details or relevant evidence.
4. The ability to stick to the point and to deal logically with the question.
5. The ability to remember facts and relate them to relevant generalizations. (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1965, p. 407)

Examples of essay questions which were recently used in the English Comprehensive Examinations in New York state follow:

1. The very nature of man makes it impossible for him to live 'by bread alone,' he must live by faith--faith in an ideal or principle, faith in his country, faith in mankind. From the poems and essays you have read, choose any four selections. In each case show by definite references that the author expresses one of the kinds of faith mentioned. Give titles and authors.
2. 'History records changes. Literature makes them real for us.' Using two novels or a novel and a short story, explain how each of the two selections has made some phase of history more real to you. Refer directly to the incidents and portrayals in the stories to support your discussion. Give titles and authors.
3. From books that we read we see many pictures of family life, some of which reveal sympathy, understanding and cooperation among the members, while others reveal discord and lack of harmony. From one novel and one play you have read, select a family group (parents with children; children with one another; family with servants, guests, or relatives) and discuss what leads to cooperation or prevents cooperation. Give titles and authors. (Regents Examinations in New York state are state-wide examinations given at either the end of the third year or the fourth year, and have been prepared for almost three quarters of a century. Copies of these examinations are printed at the end of several handbooks commercially prepared by English teachers and/or supervisors. The handbooks are designed to help students review three or four years of English and to prepare them for the comprehensive examination given at the end of each semester. For additional essay-type questions, see Hipple.)

The major difficulty with the essay question is that the rating is subjective. In spite of almost forty years of attempting to make rating of test essays more objective, "considerable variation of assigned marks has been found, not only between one teacher and another, but in ratings by the same teacher from day to day." Among the interesting experiments in trying to determine more objective criteria is the study in the Spring 1958 issue of the NEWSLETTER of the Michigan Council of Teachers of English "Evaluating a Theme." Another helpful booklet, distributed by the State Education Department of New York is SUGGESTIONS ON THE RATINGS OF REGENTS EXAMINATION PAPERS IN ENGLISH, with a special section on the rating of literature essay questions of the type described above. (This pamphlet may be obtained from the Bureau of Tests and Measurements of the State Education Department, Albany, New York.) Many local and state courses of study have indicated ways of correcting compositions. "The Guide for Evaluating Written Work" and "Criteria for Evaluating a Theme" from GUIDEPOSTS TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS OF SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS merit attention. (Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction, Seattle: Board of Education, 1962)

Objective-Type Tests

Objective tests are usually of two types. In the first, the student supplies the answer; in the second, the student selects the answer from several supplied.

EMINENT VICTORIANS was written by ______________________

Iago is a character in ______________________

Wessex is the setting for the novels by ______________________

The advantages of such questions are:

1. The answers are definite and specific.
2. They can be rated quickly and accurately.
3. Wide sampling is possible, since a large number of questions can be answered in a unit of testing time.

The disadvantages are:

1. The teacher tends to concentrate on details.
2. You must be certain that there is only one correct answer to each question. Whereas the average student may give the answer you expected, the bright student, who has read widely, may think of several answers.
3. It is difficult to measure the higher process of thought and reasoning.

How to Write Good Completion Items

1. Write your item so that only one correct answer is possible. For example, in these items several answers are possible:
   Shakespeare wrote ____________________.
   Coleridge was born in ___________(This might be answered by the year, century, city, country.)
2. It is better to place the blank at the end of the statement, rather than at the beginning.
3. Avoid extraneous clues to the correct answer. If the class has been studying forms of poetry and has learned about the sonnet, ode, triolet, you have given an extraneous clue to this question.
   A long, serious poem is called an _______________. Obviously the student would not write a sonnet or a triolet.

Examples of good and bad short-answer questions based on Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" are described in J. N. Hook's THE TEACHING OF HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH. (NY: Ronald, 1972, 4th Ed., p. 163)

The Selection Type of Question

There are three forms: true-false, multiple choice, and matching.

True-False

In this question, the student writes T or F or True or False, depending upon the answer.

Ernest Hemingway won the Nobel Prize.

Shakespeare was born in the 17th century.

THE SCARLET LETTER was written in the early 19th century.

Advantages are:

1. These are fairly easy to write.
2. A large sampling can be covered in any given test period.
3. Scoring is objective and quick.

Disadvangages are:

1. It is limited almost entirely to testing facts on specific information.
2. Many of the larger outcomes of English instruction, such as generalizations, explanations, evaluations, cannot be tested by true-false questions.
3. There is encouragement to guess at the correct answer.
4. It is difficult to write questions that can be marked true or false without qualifications. Even a simple question like "Shakespeare wrote HAMLET," may draw a negative answer from the bright student who has read something about the Baconian Theory or who remembers that on the title page of his edition is THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET.

How to Write Good True-False Items

1. Make statements that are absolutely true or false without qualifications or exceptions.
2. Avoid statements that contain elements that are partly true and partly false.
3. Avoid trick questions (students resent them)
   Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings wrote THE YEARLIN.

4. Avoid long involved statements with qualifying clauses.

Multiple-Choice Questions

These questions are very popular with the various College Boards, Civil Service, Army Intelligence and similar tests because the answers can be indicated on a separate sheet which can be scored electronically and quickly.

Advantages are:

1. The correct answer is limited to the choices given, thus eliminating any possibility of students' concern over universal application.
2. The guessing factor is less than in the true-false question.
3. Reasoning ability, fundamental understandings, as well as facts and principles may be tested.
4. Many items can be tested in a period of class time.
5. The scoring is objective and rapid.

Disadvantages are:

1. It is applicable when there are a number of related possible answers. Where the choices are obviously unrelated, the student can guess the answers easily.
2. It is time-consuming to prepare four or five choices for a single question.

One of the most vocal critics of multiple choice questions in the 1960's was Benesh Hoffman, whose article, "The Tyranny of Multiple-Choice Tests" in HARPER'S (March 1961, pp. 37-44) stirred up a controversy. Joining the fray in favor of short-answer questions was Norris M. Sanders. Using Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, Sanders provided examples of short-answer questions for every level of taxonomy including application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. (CLASSROOM QUESTIONS: WHAT KINDS? NY: Harper, 1966, passim, but especially Chapters 6, 7, and 8.)

Hipple, in 1973, defended short-answer questions in that they:
. . .can prove immensely useful as a check on whether a student has read and understood an assignment or whether he has learned some facts and some simple relationships. (He gives some excellent examples of test items that demand more than simple recall, all taken from tests prepared by student teachers. Hipple, pp. 287-288)

Matching Items

A series of item is listed in columns to be matched with each other. It is advisable to have more possibilities than correct answers in the second column so that students who know some of the answers will not guess at the others by elmination.

Criteria of a Good Test:

1. Validity. A well constructed test should measure student's progress toward realization of the objectives of the course or unit.
2. Reliability. It should distinguish those who have mastered the subject from those who have not. It should consist of items carefully selected from the whole range of factual materials or principles taught. Poor administration of tests decreases reliability.
3. Clarity. It should be clear as to directions, construction of test items, assignment of credit, and should be free from ambiguity or error.
4. Objectivity. In evaluating an answer to a question, several teachers marking the same paper should arrive at approximately the same mark.
5. Administrability. In a good test the exercises are arranged as to difficulty, convenience in scoring, and with provision for a reasonable allotment of time.
6. Originality. The test should challenge thought, stimulate imagination, arouse interest, provide for variety, and generally serve as a teaching as well as a testing device.

Testing has been a subject for discussion, heated argument, and objective debate almost from the very beginning of testing procedures. The fact that so much time was spent at the 1974 National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention proves

that the final words have not yet been said. Perhaps the results coming out of the National Assessment of Education may provide us with clues for even better types of tests than those indicated above. At any rate, tests obviously are here to stay, and it is the responsibility of every teacher of English to think seriously when preparing tests designed to indicate growth and/or achievement in all areas of English.

I should like to conclude with some interesting observations about those teachers who may possibly be able to teach but certainly do not know how to test by Orville Palmer in his brilliant article, "Seven Classic Ways of Grading Dishonestly" in the October 1962 ENGLISH JOURNAL. As a former editor of College Board programs of the Educational Testing Service, he knows whereof he speaks. The teacher who grades dishonestly does so by one or more of the following methods:

1. By abdication (putting together crude and inadequate tests at the last minute and tailoring the course to ready-made tests).
2. By using the "carrots and clubs" system (grading on extraneous factors--deportment, penmanship, covers for reports, extra credit for reading).
3. By default (maintaining that tests are meaningless and giving so few that students' grades depend on an overly small sample of their performances).
4. By becoming zealots (grading everything except classroom posture).
5. By changing the rules in mid-game (shifting grading standards up or down to threaten or encourage).
6. By being a psychic grader (considering that tests are superfluous and inferior to intuition).
7. By anchoring the grading system "in the rainbow of an impossible perfection" (no one gets an A, few B's, and many fail).

Let us hope and pray that the teachers in these seven categories are becoming fewer and fewer.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"But what concepts and attitudes does education as yet reflect and teach? The first, above all, is certainty. Absolutes. Fixed states. Most of the 'curriculum' consists of the memorization of 'facts' and everyone comes away with the deeply internalized concept that there's one right answer for every question. If this was ever true, it is no longer true. Most 'subjects' are taxonomies--verbal classification systems--that are memorized, without any understanding of the degree to which the 'subject' relates to anything else in the curriculum much less anything outside the curriculum.

Another concept that education presently internalizes in students is that of the value of obedient passivity. The student who is best rewarded in school is the one who does what he is told, quickly and without question. All this produces personalities that are rigid, timid, and authoritarian. We learn best, as Dewey said, what we do.

In a world of rapid change what can you predict about the survival prospects of someone who expects or demands absolute certainty, and absolute stability? And, consequently, who requires a 'higher authority' to make decisions and choices for him? It would seem reasonable that education rather should focus on helping students to develop mastery of such concepts as relativity, probability, contingency, and process. These concepts foster personalities willing to formulate and act on tentative estimates. What can be more important to understand in an increasingly complex world than that nothing occurs in isolation; that everything always depends on a number of other things; that there is no single cause for any effect? Students need to master the concept of function and relationships as processes rather than as fixed states." (Charles Weingartner, "What's It All About? What's It All Mean?" FLORIDA ENGLISH JOURNAL, December 1969)

BACK TO THE BASICS--TEACHER AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Leo Croteau, Sahuaro High School, Tucson

Title One. . .Headstart. . .Title Three. . .NDEA Grants. . .NSF Grants. . . State mandated textbook selection. . .Busing. . .National Assessment. . .Title Nine. . .Upward Bound--the list seems endless--all to improve the education of our youngsters, all missing the point. National tests' results indicate, at least on the surface, that educators are doing a less effective job, year after year. Of course, the cry is "Get back to the basics!"

Getting back to the basics involves more than just that. It means attempting to use the basics as a foundation from which to improve the effectiveness of instruction that today's young people require and that will enable them to contribute to their society and to themselves, in whatever role each chooses to serve. To get back to the basics requires that we examine what was effective when the "basics" were the core of the curriculum. It requires incorporating these effective ways with those that we continue to develop in our quest for better understanding of human learning behavior and the requirements that that behavior relies upon.

I suggest that the essential element in former effective education was the rapport, the closeness that teachers could establish with their students in the one room schoolhouse, and the immediate response that a teacher could effect when youngsters' needs became apparent in the classroom. Granted, many things were lacking, particularly in a material sense, but teacher authority and responsibility were not. It was the American society's migration to the cities since World War II and the resultant growth of large schools at all levels that siphoned off the immediate authority and responsibility of classroom teachers to the layers of bureaucratic hierarchy that seemed to be required for large schools, transferred the responsibility for a youngster's education to a plethora of department chairmen, assistant principals, curriculum coordinators, assistant and deputy superintendents, and superintendents.

It was the creation of the industry-like structure (management versus labor) for school systems that removed the decision making authority and responsibility from the teacher. It was <u>his</u> authority and responsibility that permitted the one room schoolhouse to be a place of real learning.

The increased structure appeared to be organizationally necessary, just for adequate support of teachers in the classroom. What was not necessary, indeed proved detrimental, was the transfer of authority to higher paid supervisors of whatever title, persons who moved farther and farther away from the classroom and youngsters, and then basing fundamental decisions on the advice and counsel of these supervising individuals who became more and more concerned about their positions and retaining them than in maintaining the concern that they had when they were in the classroom. Decisions became structure and system oriented. Supervisors failed to realize that the function of any school employee who does not perform in the classroom must be based entirely in supporting those who remained there--the youngsters and their teachers. It is the teachers who must make the decisions that increase the effectiveness of the education going on there; it is the function of all others to serve the requirements of those decisions.

It is ironic that we, as a nation of people, have invested increasingly in heavier dollar amounts on the preparation of our teachers, and, at the same time, have reduced their decision making responsibilities, to the point that they are often only instruments of an educational structure that is more concerned about its survival

than in the effectiveness of the instruction of youngsters. Today's practice of establishing schools with hundreds, even thousands of students, and then placing responsibility on a principal who attempts to direct the teaching activities of fifty, one hundred, and even more teachers in a building is counterproductive. For the principal in those circumstances is essentially removed from the classrooms where the learning process is operating, relying, finally, on his "authority" to determine the support each teacher in those classrooms will receive, again, often with the advice of others, assistants, who are not in the classroom themselves.

There are alternatives. A first such is to establish a fundamental policy that teachers have the authority and responsibility for the learning that takes place in their classrooms, and that those individuals who serve outside the classrooms do so by satisfying the needs that classroom teachers determine are necessary. A second alternative is to eliminate the practice of paying higher salaries only to those who leave the classroom for supervisory positions in the educational structure. This practice has caused tremendous loss to our classrooms in at least two ways: It has removed truly good teachers from classroom contact with their students, and it has required them to pursue a vocation in administration that removes them farther and farther from that classroom and brings about the decreasing interest for what goes on there, to the detriment of students and teachers who remain.

A plan to implement these alternatives is simple. Restore teacher authority and responsibility for what occurs in the classroom. Establish salary scales that recognize this. Allow teachers in academic departments and schools to select those who will coordinate their efforts--department chairmen and principals--and determine how long each will serve in those positions, and further, to require those chosen to continue to function as classroom teachers, if for only one period a day. Permit teachers to determine the need for additional support beyond the department and school, and permit them to select those individuals who will serve in providing that support. Give teachers the authority and responsibility to evaluate their peers and support personnel, to aid in their continuing development, and to remove those who cannot develop.

This plan will restore the basics that we are concerned about as a nation of people and further build on them as all elements of the community continue to determine needs of students in our developing society. The basic element in education is teacher-student contact, and all that must follow from the assessment that results. All other elements of the educational community must be directed toward supporting the needs of that contact.

It should be noted, at this point, that the Eighteen Recommendations of NCTE, approved in 1972 for use by school systems and regional accrediting agencies, go a long way toward implementing this plan.

- - - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"The way a teacher teaches--with a textbook and assigned seats or in a room with a choice of activities--may have far-ranging psychological effects on a child that include but also go beyond his ability to read and write.
These are the conclusions of educational researchers at the Stanford Research Institute who studied poor children in kindergarten through third grade in schools participating in federally funded Follow Through programs.
'The way a teacher conducts class is the biggest factor in a child's early educational growth and development--more important even than the child's skills or the quantity and quality of instructional materials,' according to a study conducted by Dr. Jane Stallings." ("Teaching Study Findings Told," LOS ANGELES TIMES, July 23, 1975, p. II-1)

RELEVANCE IS OUT, CLASSICS ARE IN

Florence Miller

(Reprinted with permission of the author and THE NEW YORK TIMES, "© 1975 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission." It originally appeared in THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, August 31, 1975, p. 19.)

Note: The following memo was found near the coffee urn at the recent Return to Basics conference sponsored by I.C.S. (Institute for Confidence in Our Schools).

TO: English Department
FROM: Chairman
RE: Suggested Curricula for the Fall (Spring) Term.

Recent trending indicates a shift from "relevant" literature. There is a rising tide of criticism and displeasure re: the reading material taught in our schools. It would, therefore, behoove our department to forestall what could be a serious and possibly unpleasant brouhaha by focusing this year on the established classics. Although, in recent years, changes in curricula have not been made unilaterally, the imminence of crisis stimulates decisive action. There will, of course, be an open discussion at our first staff meeting. It is only fair, however, to note that both the principal and the chairman of the school board made their views re: this matter abundantly clear at a meeting held after the June closing. They also noted, in a non-threatening manner, that there is a surplus of experienced teachers nationwide.

Please return sets of CATCHER IN THE RYE and THE POETRY OF KAHLIL GIBRAN to the book closet by Friday, 3 P.M. Thank you.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR WAR AND PEACE, a novel by COUNT LEO TOLSTOY, translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett.

1. Alphabetizing (stress speed)

   Warmup

Mortemart	Zherkov
Yakov	Nesvitsky
Berg	Telyanin
Shinshin	Bilibin
Mack	Balaga

   More Difficult

   Agrafena Ivanovna
   Anna Pavlovna Scherer
   Prince Vasily Kuragin
   Anna Mikhailovna Drubetskaya
   Marya Lvovna Karagina
   Marya Ivanovna Dolohova
   Count Kirill Vladimirovich Bezukhov
   Dmitry Onufrich
   Prokho Ignatich
   Pelageya Danilovna Melyukova

2. Dictionary Study (Much of the length of WAR AND PEACE has to do with military campaigns. Students often skip reading these pages. An understanding of military terms may motivate better attention to the text.)

a. hussar	f. skirmish
b. truce	g. adjutant
c. bivouacking	h. flank
d. cavalry	i. cutlass
e. deploy	j. tattoo-call

3. Arranging Ideas in Sequence (Each set of statements is out of chronological order. Students are to put them in correct order.)
   a. Pierre's father dies.
   b. Pierre joins the Masons.
   c. Pierre gets married.

   a. Princess Liza dies.
   b. Princess Liza realizes that Prince Andrey's love for her is cold.
   c. Princess Liza has a difficult labor.

   a. Prince Andrey meets Natasha.
   b. Prince Andrey meets Napoleon.
   c. Prince Andrey dies.

   a. Dolohov almost dies.
   b. Dolohov sits on the window sill.
   c. Dolohov joins the plan to abduct Natasha.

   a. Prince Bolkonsky shows displeasure with Princess Marya.
   b. Prince Bolkonsky dies.
   c. Prince Bolkonsky gets friendly with Mlle. Bourienne.

   a. The French cross the Niemen.
   b. Tsar Alexander reviews the troops at Olmütz.
   c. Kutuzov pursues the French to Krasnoe.

4. Diminutives (Identifying diminutives may be done as a class exercise. Students will then have a ready guide and the teacher will be prepared for the complaint that there are "too many characters.")
   a. Borinka
   b. Mishka
   c. Mitenka
   d. Petya
   e. Nikolinka
   f. Andryusha
   g. Masha
   h. Matveyevna
   i. Nikolushka
   j. Dunyasha

5. Character Study (Choose the word or phrase that best completes the thought. Remind students that it is to their advantage to choose quickly and decisively.)
   a. Pierre is . . . .
      1. obese 2. slender 3. average
   b. Prince Andrey is . . . .
      1. optimistic 2. depressed 3. nervous
   c. Princess Marya is . . . .
      1. lonely 2. resentful 3. fun-loving
   d. Natasha is . . . .
      1. extravagant 2. impetuous 3. slender
   e. Kutuzov is . . . .
      1. blind 2. one-eyed 3. has normal vision
   f. Prince Bolkonsky is . . . .
      1. easy-going 2. insane 3. scientific
   g. Sonya is . . . .
      1. scheming 2. sad 3. patient
   h. Princess Ellen is . . . .
      1. very beautiful 2. ambitious 3. unstable
   i. Count Rostov is . . . .
      1. lovable 2. weak-willed 3. indulgent

THE NEW NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Jim L. Cromer, University of South Carolina

We no longer can take it for granted that everything is going to be exactly the same from the moment of birth to the moment of one's convenient disposal. We have to accept the fact that reality is a process of living development, change, and growth, and that the notion of completion is a mortuary concept. (Serge Chermayeff, "The Shape of Humanism," in Gregory Battcock, ed., NEW IDEAS IN ART EDUCATION: A CRITICAL ANTHOLOGY, NY: Dutton, p. 3)

Being alive is experiencing constant change, for change is the material out of which existence is created. Completion, however, is an end, a finish which accompanies non-existence. But it is also that moment during the creation of art which marks the forceful thrust into a new level of consciousness. This thrust is followed by an immense flood of newness, and the commonplace is either totally rejected or adapts to the change and takes on new life and vitality. We were once a society of people who contained their information in print, and we retrieved what we were capable and willing. Now we are a society of people with a system of transmitting information which is spilling over as if there are no boundaries to hold the information in check. This new world of electric-images is totally absorbing; it sucks us in, and mixes up our being in a whirlwind of new information, new time, new space, new colors, new eyes and ears to see and hear a wholly different world.

Jerzy Kozinski, in his book BEING THERE, describes a character who is the product of an electric-video image environment. By some strange coincidence, Chance (named that because he was born by chance), grew up with the "Old Man" and a servant and until the death of the "Old Man," knew no other people. He tended his garden, ate, slept, and spent the entire remaining time watching TV. He met no other people and no one met him. He drew entirely on his TV to tell him about the outside world. Although the situation which produced Chance was fictitious, Chance's response to TV may not be too exaggerated. For example, his description of TV was that

> everything on TV was tangled and mixed and yet smoothed out: night and day, big and small, tough and brittle, soft and rough, hot and cold, far and near. In this colored world of television, gardening was the white cane of a blind man. By changing the channel he could change himself. He could go through phases, as garden plants went through phases, but he could change as rapidly as he wished by twisting the dial backward and forward. In some cases he could spread out into the screen without stopping, just as on TV people spread out into the screen. By turning the dial, Chance could bring others inside his eyelids. Thus he came to believe that it was he, Chance, and no one else, who made himself be. The figure on the TV screen looked like his own reflection in a mirror. . . He sank into the screen. Like sunlight and fresh air and mild rain, the world from outside the garden entered Chance, and Chance, like a TV image, floated into the world, buoyed up by a force he did not see and could not name. (R. Buckminister Fuller, EDUCATION AUTOMATION: FREEING THE SCHOLAR TO RETURN TO HIS STUDIES, Carbondale: Southern Illinois U Press, 1962, p. 5-6)

Immediately questions rush in upon us. Is this true? Does the new world of Video, Film, LP, all of the electric-imagery affect us this much? How much has the world changed? And is this new world good and healthy? To understand the new world of electric-images we must begin with the assumption that the new world is a "Natural" world in that it has been created by man, a natural being, and that its driving force for projecting things into existence is a natural force. Buckminister Fuller states that

> In my viewpoint there is no meaning to the word 'artificial.' Man can only do

what nature permits him to do. Man does not invent anything. He makes discoveries of principles operative in nature and often finds ways of generalizing those principles and reapplying them in surprising directions. That is called invention. But he does not do anything artificial. Nature has to permit it, and if Nature permits it, it is natural. There is naught which is unnatural. (Fuller, pp. 52-53)

Man's Natural World has constantly expanded and changed with each new invention and each new discovery and each new creation of art and science. The creation of poetry, the art of a verbally expressed reality, is the result of our natural drive to know new worlds which are the ultimate in man's evoluting consciousness. Gunther Muller describes poetry as "a linguistically conveyed reality and the force by which the linguistically conveyed reality of poetry is produced is a natural force." (Gunther Muller, "Morphological Poetics," in Susanne K. Langer, ed., REFLECTIONS ON ART: A SOURCE BOOK OF WRITINGS BY ARTISTS, CRITICS, AND PHILOSOPHERS, NY: Oxford U Press, 1961, p. 203) When man discovered that he could grow animals and vegetables instead of being a hunter and food gatherer, his Natural World became agricultural based. Eventually the Natural World of agriculture gave way to the Natural World of industry. The invention of the alphabet and movable type created an immense impact on his Natural World, changing it into a world unlike the previous world. The changes that have taken place since we have moved into an electric and electronic world have changed the Natural World so much that all of the institutions of the previous Natural World such as economy, family, schooling (and education), and government have become obsolete and have been straining and struggling to make the changes necessary to become part of the New Natural World. What we have is forced creativity. If the inhabitants, objects, and processes of the old world do not creatively change they will become first obsolete, then camp, then a type of artistic content for a final reflection by the New Natural World and then pass into man's history only to be viewed from an academic distance but never to have an active place in the live world. As a person totally submerged in the New Natural World, Gene Youngblood describes what this is like.

> As a child of the New Age, for whom 'nature' is the solar system and 'reality' is an invisible environment of messages, I am naturally hypersensitive to the phenomenon of vision. I have come to understand that all language is but a substitute vision. . . (Gene Youngblood, EXPANDED CINEMA, NY: Dutton, 1970, p.45)

It is important to clarify a potential misunderstanding of how the changes in what we view and know as our natural world occur. We live in a throw-away society. Valuable unreplenishable resources are used up and abandoned as waste, trash and garbage. Indeed, we have such a throw-away society that waste has become a problem. Our entrenched thinking about change is that when something has outlived its usefulness, we simply get rid of it. This view clouds our understanding of the way in which we change our reality. Change does mean that some things will become obsolete but this does not mean that those things will not or cannot transform and take on new life. This is the quality of life, to change, to grow, to take on new meaning and to acquire a new felt consciousness. This new felt consciousness is the flash that occurs just before the emergency of a change in our Natural World. Edmund Carpenter, in speaking of the new elec-media says that "what it offers, I believe, is a sudden insight, and unexpected glimpse into a reality that, at most, was merely suspected but never before seen with such clarity." ("Forward" to THEY BECAME WHAT THEY BEHELD, NY: Ballantine, 1970) The felt consciousness, the spirit that pervades the times, moves into reality while remaining invisible and gradually finds the means of expression that will reshape the Natural World of man. During the transformation, the old world is dissolved and scattered, letting loose information into raw material that will fuel and power the new emerging world. The potential for new thought and new consciousness, and new insight is increased and we experience a New Natural World which is fat with chance.

ERIC

Rollo May says that we live in a time when one world is dying and in some ways already dead, and yet the new age has not fully been born. This creates a lot of trouble and the kind of people needed to survive this age are going to be authentic in that they author or create themselves and they have the courage to face a world nobody has yet lived in or knows much about. The new age will be an outgrowth of the past but it will move into areas which we now only partly know. ("Rollo May on the Courage to Create," MEDIA AND METHODS, May/June, 1974, p. 14)

Confusion and chaos do exist and are much like the confusion of a sinking ship with all on board desperately trying to find the new buoyancy which will keep them afloat and alive. The old world of pre-elec-imagery was a cultural fixation that held all people spellbound. The break in the literal trance came suddenly and we moved swiftly into a new kind of imagery. We felt the powerful gaze of a new and more mesmerizing influence: the electric and electronic gadgetry of video, film, radio, telegraph, recordings, computers. It presented images and sounds which drew us in and overpowered our image making system and lured us further into a world we were unprepared to live in. The revolutionary New Natural World came about rapidly. Edmund Farrell outlines the emergence of the new image making inventions which modified our experiencing and understanding of time and space.

> 1839, the daguerreotype; 1844, the telegraph; 1876, the first telephone message; 1877, the phonograph and gasoline automobile; 1893, motion pictures; 1895, the first wireless message; 1903, the airplane with motor; 1906, transmission of human voice by radio; 1920, regularly scheduled radio broadcasts; 1923, a picture televised between New York and Philadelphia; 1930, the airplane with jet engine; 1932, FM radio; 1939, computer with automatic sequence; 1941, authorization of full commercial television; 1948, LP records; 1965, the first commercial satellite. (DECIDING THE FUTURE: A FORECAST OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF SECONDARY TEACHERS OF ENGLISH 1970-2000 A.D.,Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1971, p. 74)

The elec-imagery has not only completely changed what man (primarily the youth today) views as its Natural World but it has changed his ability to examine himself. Like the myth of narcissis, man has seen his new image and being totally enraptured by this image, and having the technology for self-inspection, he is finding new methods of expanding consciousness. Early reflections by man resulted in a consciousness turning inward upon itself. Teilhard De Chardin expressed it as

> no longer merely to know, but to know oneself; no longer merely to know, but to know that one knows. By this individualization of himself in the depth of himself, the living element, which heretofore has been spread out and divided over a diffuse circle of perceptions and activities, was constituted for the first time as a centre in the form of a point at which all the impressions and experiences knit themselves together and fuse into a unity that is conscious of its own organization. (THE PHENOMENON OF MAN, NY: Harper, 1965, p. 9)

The individualization which was a part of the print dominated world must still exist in order to retain a unity and consistency on one's own existence. It is the singular I which creates a total image of all that is impinging upon his senses and makes a living natural sphere through which a personalized body emerges. . .It is the skin which contains the body of our consciousness.

It is the linguistic I which is the expression for the total image that constitutes each integral being. That thin layer of consciousness, like the thin multicolored surface of a bubble, reflects inward the images that strike the surface of man's multicolored senses and reveal man to himself. The new electronic imagery is no less personalized in that it presents to us the inward images of others. But it has made us curious again about the way consciousness is brought into existence. The individualization begins a further process of humanization by seeking to link up with other centres of consciousness. This is evident in the consciousness revolution

called the New Consciousness, mind research, the human potential, which has been taking place recently. John W. White writes that

Now it is happening everywhere: meditation, psychic phenomena, Don Juan, classes in yoga and mind control, occult practices such as astrology and tarot, organic gardening, psychic plant research, and the use of drugs. Thus, on the farthest frontiers of a host of exotic disciplines, researchers are discovering--or, at least, claiming with conviction--that consciousness is the primary factor in all experience, the fundamental ground of all knowing, all perception, all states of being. ("The Consciousness Revolution," SATURDAY REVIEW, Feb. 22, 1975, p. 15)

The elec-imagery of the New Natural World and the sophisticated technology of our scientific way to knowledge has made possible the examination of the very organ which gives us a state of consciousness, the brain. McLuhan writes that

Biologists and physicists are much more aware of the radical revolution effected in our senses by new technological environments than are the literati, for whom the new environments are more threatening than for those in other disciplines... (Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, WAR AND PEACE IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE, NY: Bantam, 1968, p. 7)

Brain research is making fantastic discoveries about neurophysiological capabilities for handling information, thinking, modes of consciousness and creating images. It is believed that the brain has more than a million channels with the capability of transmitting 10 million bits of information each second, yet the brain's underdeveloped condition allows it to receive only 27 pieces of information per second. The Nobel prize winning physiologist, Sir John Eccles, believes that brain research into the way stimuli is censored in order to avoid an overload of stimuli will constitute a frontier in the study of awareness. (Douglass Carter, "The Intellectual in Videoland," SATURDAY REVIEW, May 31, 1975, p. 12) Beyond the philosophical concern for what is knowledge, it is true that man must select out of the barrage that which makes up his reality. The electronic tools do not only carry the message but they expand man's capacity to handle a larger, more complex reality. Sir John Eccles hints at the possibility that interpretation of the more complex visual and audio fields associated with video, film, recording and telephone can cause complex brain activity to increase. He states that artistic creation results when

images of beauty and subtlety, blending in harmony, are expressed in language (verbal, musical, pictorial) in order to evoke vicarious experience in others. Entrancing displays of imagery are experienced by ordinary people under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs. . . One may suspect that the cortex under these conditions tends to develop ever more complex and effectively interlocked patterns of neuronal activity involving larger fractions of its neuron population. (Sir John Eccles, "The Physiology of Imagination," ALTERED STATES OF AWARENESS, Readings from SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1972, p. 39)

But then he fails to see the implication this has for creative imagination and describes creativeness only in regard to the kind of knowing that is the result of critical scientific reasoning.

Michael Shamberg says that

Right now it's believed that the language of the brain is different from any of man's externalized media. It probably embodies an entirely different logical structure which may even be incomprehensible to itself, internally. (GUERRILLA TELEVISION, NY: Holt, 1972, p. 31)

Research is now underway which will give us more understanding of how the brain handles images and how certain specialized activities are accomplished. Roger W. Sperry states that "Our understanding of mind-brain interaction has been vastly altered by

studies that now offer a clearer picture of the two brain hemispheres and their specialized forms of intellect." ("Left-Brain, Right-Brain," SATURDAY REVIEW, Aug. 9, 1975, p. 30) The first series of operations in which the corpus callosum, a thick bundle of nerves interconnecting the brain's two large cerebral hemispheres, were performed in the late thirties and early forties on patients afflicted with severe epilepsy. Sperry and his colleagues conducted laboratory experiments on cats and monkeys in which the halves of the brain were surgically disconnected. They found that each half had its own "private sensations, percepts, and learning experiences all cut off from the awareness of its partner hemisphere." But these tests with animals did not reveal that in human brains the right half and left half are specialized in different kinds of functions. This is because of the ability of man to perform complex symbol behavior in the form of language, which of course separates him from other animals. The first chance to study the split brain phenomenon in humans came in 1961, and since then several people have undergone callosum-cutting operations. Researchers have found that the left side of the brain is highly verbal and mathematical with the capabilities of performing analytic, symbolic, computer-like sequential reasoning. The right side of the brain is spatial and mute, performing synthetic spatio-perceptual and mechanical kinds of information processing that cannot be simulated by computers. (Sperry, p. 31) The left side of the brain is the area which develops almost all verbal functioning and the right side of the brain is visuospatial and makes itself known through dreams and fantasies. (Richard D. Koniček, "Seeking Synergism for Man's Two-Hemisphere Brain," PHI DELTA KAPPAN, September 1975, p. 37)

Consider how we acquired the conditions we find in our contemporary world for receiving the elec-images which assemble to form our conception of reality: our New Natural World View. As far back as Aristotle, man knew the importance of developing verbal language skills "not only for their usefulness, but also because many other sorts of knowledge are acquired through them." (Richard McKeonon, "The Basic Works of Aristotle," in George Pappas, ed., CONCEPTS IN ART AND EDUCATION, NY: Macmillan, 1971, p. 4) Many scholars acknowledge language as man's greatest invention. As Susan Langer puts it,

> By means of language we can conceive the intangible, incorporeal things we call our ideas, and the equally inostensible elements of our perceptual world that we call facts. It is by virtue of language that we can think, remember, imagine, and finally conceive a universe of facts. . .Yet there is a great deal of experience that is knowable not only as immediate, formless, meaningless impact, but as one of the intricate web of life, yet defies discursive formulation, and therefore verbal expression. ("Expressiveness," George Pappas, ed., CONCEPTS IN ART AND EDUCATION, NY: Macmillan, 1971, p. 172)

For the past 500 years, from the invention of movable type and into the contemporary institution of schooling, print has dominated our thinking processes and research is now revealing that one-half of the brain, the right side of non-verbal, imagistic, intuitive and visual-spatial, has gone undeveloped. People are born into a new environment and only knowing that environment for their total reality, find it easy to accept the characteristic of the new environment in regard to information getting and receiving, concepts of time and space, nature of imagery (both mental and physical) and what is believed to be fact and fantasy. Others, who have lived through the transformation, many times because of prior deep seated, conditioned responses or a desperate need to belong to the new environment, make half-conclusions and reject still valuable processes such as reading and writing before the transformation is complete. This has been the case of the "electronic prophets" of the 60's in their attitude toward print media.

Now that the transformation is nearing completion, the vast amounts of video and film and audio images have emphasized development of the right side of the brain. The

ERIC

visual-audio world of the elec-imagery has transformed our Natural World, and print as a way of life is gone. I have two major fears: (1) that print, with its ability to stimulate personal imagery will go undeveloped because of the attitude proposed by many of the electronic prophets and the willingness to people to believe that print is dead, and (2) that without a means of maintaining personal imagery, the steady barrage of outside elec-images will take the place of personal imagery and experiential awareness and we will become subservient to the very technology which could offer a vastly expanded consciousness. We may have the condition in which awareness through sensory experience is being replaced by experiencing through the video and film cameras, data pouring out of computers and relationships with others through recordings and telephones. We will not have active, creative, imaginative thinking people who can reshape and mold the incoming elec-imagery into the personal imagery that keeps them master of their consciousness.

The transformation from a print-imagery into an elec-imagery has been one of confusion and chaos. When the awareness of our New Elec-Natural World increased to the point that its characteristics and impacts were becoming visible, it was embraced to the point of excluding print before print had a chance to alter its role and maintain a viable place in our new environment. This is wrong and to say it is wrong is not reactionary or conservative, but futuristic thinking. Evolution carries with it change and many times that change is extreme. But to see how verbal language, one of our most potent, powerful and rich tools, will transform is to also see its timeless quality and the essential nature which keeps it young through many transformations of our Natural World. Verbal language has a type of abstractness that is at the same time unique to each person and universal to all persons. This quality of abstract language neutralizes the dichotomy of individuality and universality and allows the viewer to see the full spectrum of linguistic reality as it shapes the Natural World of man rather than hopelessly see only parts, without knowing how all of the parts interact to make up a synergistic whole. The abstractness of verbal language, used to express a writer's view of reality, is then translated into the reader's own personal mental imagery, allowing him to process the information into his own view of reality. The imagery print dealt with was incidental (sequential--one event following another), concrete in time and space (sensory), and used fantasy to explore the limits of reality. The elec-imagery is coincidental in that it seems to follow a chance order rather than a logical sequence (lack of causality). Change has increased so fast that evolution has taken on the qualities of revolution. The images are still sensory but the breakdown of time and space has created imagery which is the product of ultra-sensory sources. And the fantasy which allowed people to try out their ideas about religion, love, and social structures has given way to a hoard of futuristic alternatives which are sometimes frightening and sometimes exhilarating but are all imaginable. We live with the feeling that anything is possible and nothing is fantasy anymore. The imagery of the pre-electric Natural World grew out of a direct sensory world rearranged into the fantasy world which formed the basis for creative thinking, structuring and ordering. Imagery is still part of natural man in the electric-electronic world but it has changed. The advent of elec-media is organized into a configural structure (picturesque ordering of parts into shape and form) and is accompanied by aural space (sound) and oral (verbal talk) context. It is not different in kind from direct sensory information but it has taken on dimensions which make it ULTRA-SENSORY. It has transcended the boundaries of the senses and created a new time and space extension of the old time and space. It is coincidental in its rhythms and flow of things as they come together and separate in what seems to be a random order. This randomness is not a lack of structure but an alternative structuring of information which is different from the way print structures information. J.P. Platt observes this change in the reorganizing of imagery saying that

> The universe should not be regarded as made up of 'things' but of a complex hierarchy of smaller and larger flow patterns in which the 'things' are invariant

or self-maintaining features of the flow. . . it is no distortion to speak of this world reorganization of all our patterns as a 'quantum jump' or as a sudden collective change of awareness or flash of understanding for the human race. ("What We Must Do," SCIENCE, November 28, 1969)

The change from a print-imagery Natural World to an elec-image Natural World has been so sudden and so extreme that the people who have lived through the transformation are entrenched in the 19th Century world view and are unprepared for the New Natural World. The young, who are innately a part of the New Natural World have lost the social process of education where teachers, who have an advanced state of consciousness, do not exist and the young are left to their own immature strength and naive consciousness to master the New Natural Environment. A threat to our survival is that the elec-technology seems to hold so much fascination for our young that they are mesmerized by the imagery it dangles in front of their senses. It seems to be transferring the imagery process from a personal inward creation of consciousness to images which are constructed outside the individual and these images are dangerously impersonal. The images which make up our view of reality may not be our own, but elec-images which wash over us from the media until all of our thinking is done with ready-made images, conclusions, concepts and values. Creative thinking and aesthetic sensibilities may be at a new low. We may indeed have a poverty of authentic, creative people amidst a wealth of tools and resources.

Teilhard De Chardin has described a change in the process of thinking called reflection or the ability of man to turn inward upon himself, to examine himself, to not only know but to know that he knows. He became the object of his own examination and his new natural consciousness was fused together out of the events of his own living and the imagery created by verbal and mathematical language. The creative energy traversing his new reality resulted in structures which we call art, love, feelings of anxiety, logic, language, all of the tools and inventions and discoveries which materialize the new forces into conscious reality.

The intensity of the reflection has increased in quantity in that the new-electric imagery is fast, abundant and familiar. The reflection has changed in quality in that through a configural and audio space the image is concrete, in that it is super-natural. But it is alien in that it is consummated outside of our inward life space. The images and information from an elec-media bombard our newly formed centers of consciousness, and a fission occurs, a spontaneous breaking up of the older spheres of consciousness into new organic spheres each complete in its ability to impose consciousness. The energy which will be created by this fissure of elec-images into new spheres will form new qualities of living yet undetected and unformed. It will take courageous people to explore this new world.

Print, in its ability to elicit personal imagery during the process of reflection, created a state of turning man's consciousness inward upon itself. Elec-media in its bombardment causes a potential for splitting into a new kind of consciousness if we can personalize the splitting of our center of reflective consciousness. If not, then these newly created spheres of consciousness will be lifeless. We will lose our ability to personalize our imagery and personalize our consciousness. We will become mindless operators of a lifeless reality on a course of destruction.

Print and verbal language have been viewed as low key, slow and cumbersome and so obsolete that many have predicted its demise. As it is structured, it has not been able to keep up with the speed of change in the electronic era. But it does have the ability to personalize imagery and if modified freely, it will reorganize into a tool to personalize the bombardment of elec-imagery we are experiencing in our New Natural World. We need to free the people to become sensitive to the vast image delivery of

the elec-media and to develop a super-language. This language will be capable of integrating and focusing the barrage of myriad images delivered to us over the electronic media. As we read or construct verbalness, the ultra-sensory images of the elec-media will be transformed into new creative fantastic, personalized images and we will gain new meaningfulness about our emerging Elec-Natural environment.

The super-language is here but it is still an infant struggling to come into existence. It must compete with older notions of what language should look like and how it should behave. We think of verbal langage as three modes of presentation of information: the written, the read and the spoken. Although all three of these modes relate in that they are part of the verbal language, they are different in the types of imagery they produce in the person who is participating in the verbal language. Spoken language is the first of the verbal modes to become a part of our daily functioning and also a part of those very special experiences John Dewey calls aesthetic experiences. Spoken language (oral language) is endowed with qualities which combine with visual-aural qualities to create a configural space. As a child, we encounter space with all of our senses and gradually, as we make meaning out of our encounter, we begin to arrange our visual and aural space into patterns which are recognizable because each pattern carries meaning. But, the visual and aural space is further refined because oral language extends and expands the meaning of our visual-aural reality and sets up a dynamic relationship between our visual-aural reality and other people's. The process of learning through interaction with others and through transmission of cultural and accumulated knowledge now exists. Spoken (oral) language takes our experiences of our Natural World beyond a mere sensory encounter into that 4th dimension of reflective thinking through personal mental imagery, into that imaginary and fantasy space of the mind. Through the elec-imagery, man's sensory world has become ultra-sensory and he is capable of experiencing a richer visual field because his senses go far beyond the limit imposed by the previous Natural Worlds. This situation of having a visual-aural field and oral (spoken) language moves us away from the rational-reasonable intellectual world of the scientist and closer to the direct experiential aesthetic world of the artist. John Dewey describes the nature of artistic language and how speech affects it by saying that

> because of the comparative remoteness of his end, the scientific worker operates with symbols, words and mathematical signs. The artist does his thinking in the very qualitative media he works in, and the terms lie so close to the object that he is producing that they merge directly into it. . . Speech is indeed the mother tongue. It is informed with the temperament and the ways of viewing and interpreting life that are characteristic of the culture of a continuing social group. Intense and vivid realization of the meanings of the events and situations of the universe can be achieved only through a medium already instinct with meaning. The architectural, pictorial and sculptural are always unconsciously surrounded and enriched by values that proceed from speech. It is impossible because of the nature of our organic constitution to exclude this effect. So men in general are not aware that they have been exercising an art as long as they have engaged in spoken intercourse with others. (ART AS EXPERIENCE, NY: Capricorn, 1958, pp. 240-241)

The oral language finds much of its expressive meaning in the real and tangible physical sound. The audio sound links up with the oral language making the oral language a part of the rhythm, pattern and flow of an actual sensory experience. It becomes an integral part of the aesthetic qualities which shape the meaning of an event. It becomes part of the given experience in time and space and can actually become a medium which binds the separate parts together into a meaningful experience.

We have an aesthetic of the qualities of the imagination, and the personal images that comprise this domain draw meaning out of the mother tongue of spoken language.

The print (writing and reading) domain of verbal language releases this highly personalized imagery much in the same way the video, film, radio, and LP release the ultra-sensory imagery of the New Natural World. Eccles writes about the ability of verbal language to evoke imagery by saying.

> Language, whether spoken or written, is overwhelmingly important to the function of memory and becomes increasingly so with education and cultural development. Thus we learn to experience vicariously the imagery of writers and artists. Poetry is a particularly effective medium for the transmission of imagery, transcending time and place and appealing to all who have educated (developed the appropriate brain patterns?) themselves to have in their cortex engrams ready to be evoked by the reading--or better still--the hearing--of some 'pregnant' lines of poetry. The word 'pregnant' is significant of our experience of the wealth of evoked imagery. (Eccles, pp. 37-38)

Oral verbal language functions very well within the elec-imagery. Reading and writing (print) will continue to exist and function in a very important role. It will assist us in actively processing the elec-imagery that makes up our New Natural World into personalized images. It will assist in releasing us from the passive participation of a "viewer culture" and allow the electronic viewer the freedom to manipulate, juxtapose and creatively control his imagery for the way of thinking and making decisions that are required ever so rapidly in our fastback life. But verbal language, whether spoken or in print, will change into a new super-language. We are creating, through becoming an organic part of the ultra-sensory, Elec-Image New Natural World, a new language. As Youngblood puts it

> A new language is the seed of a new world. We are making a new world by making new language. We make new language to express our inarticulate consciousness. Our intuitions have flown beyond the limits of our language. The poet purifies the language in order to merge sense and symbol. We are a generation of poets (Youngblood, p. 419)

Our super-language will contain potent combinations of words which will release a flood of psychic elec-images and will propel the reader, writer or listener into a reality rich in subjective meaning. Elec-imagery, which is now global, thrust us back into a single group where we find that we are deeply involved in everyone else's business and everyone else knows so much about us and our concerns that our subjective self has been eroded. We struggle to overcome the anonomity of the modern, crowded fast-changing, hyper-imagistic lonely environment. We need the quality of verbal language (print and spoken) to personalize our elec-imagery and help us regain the all important "I" but with a bond between the "I" and others, a shared intersubjective consciousness.

What I have been talking about does constitute a shift in some of man's major social patterns, his institutions, the nature of how he interacts and communicates with others and his level of consciousness, and marks another leap forward in his evolutionary journey. The revolution has the dual nature of being either a tool for enlightening man or a weapon for enslaving man. The time that George Orwell envisioned is almost upon us and whether or not his "Big Brother" concept of a communication system that destroyed man's freedom and made him a slave is to be fact or fiction is now being consummated. In a recent *Time* magazine article titled "Can't Anyone Here Speak English?" the crisis that verbal language is now going through is described like this:

> Today, many believe that the American language has lost not only its melody but a lot of its meaning. School children and even college students often seem disasterously ignorant of words; they stare, uncomprehending, at simple declarative English. . . Others believe that the language is taught badly and learned badly because American culture is awash with cliches, officialese, political bilge, the surreal boobspeak of advertising ('Mr. Whipple, please don't squeeze the cortex') and the sludge of academic writing. It would be no wonder if children exposed to

such discourse grew up with at least an unconscious hostility to language itself. ("Can't Anyone Speak English," TIME, August 25, 1975, p. 36)

I would encourage teachers of the English language, and all people concerned about the effects of the communications revolution and the need to get into the New Natural Environment of electric ultra-sensory images, to take an attitude that all of the unrest, all of the agonies, all of the insecurities are birth pains prior to the delivery of a new world for mankind. You should all join in the revolution by opening up to it and help develop it into a tool for increasing and expanding man's consciousness. Anthony Burgess writes of a poet named Enderby who challenges his lifeless "creative writing" class by saying

> All that's going to save your immortal soul, maaaaaan, if you have one, is words. . . Sooner or later you're all going to jail. . . All you'll have is language, the great conserver. . . Compose in your head. The time will come when you won't even be allowed a stub of pencil and the back of an envelope. (Quoted in "Can't Anyone Speak English," TIME, August 25, 1975, p. 36)

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"Obviously, something is seriously wrong with American education. Students are being promoted from the first grade to the second grade whether or not they have learned to read. Students are being graduated from high school regardless of whether or not they have mastered any specific body of knowledge. Many high school graduates, as a result, can barely read. This is called 'social promotion.' Today, it is considered improper to leave students back, or to compel them to master any body of material. While some may believe that such an approach is beneficial to students, it is difficult to understand how a lack of ability to read, write and do arithmetic can be considered helpful." (Allan C. Brownfeld, "It's High Time To Hold Schools Accountable," PHOENIX GAZETTE, September 22, 1975, p. A-6)

"The College Entrance Examination Board released its analysis of 1975 test results recently. The figures were shocking, dismaying, disturbing--pick your adjective--but they were not surprising.

Any experienced educator, any newspaper editor, any personnel director could have predicted the dismal report: Test scores last spring dropped for the 12th consecutive year. The Class of '75 scored 10 points lower in verbal skills and 8 points lower in mathematical skills than the high school graduates of the preceding year. The average scores were the lowest in two decades.

There is a defensive tendency, in certain liberal circles, to explain the decline in terms of the increasing number of 'culturally disadvantaged' students who take the tests every year. The theory holds that the tests are 'culturally biased,' but the theory is specious. The standardized tests are based on verbal and mathematical skills that should be within the grasp of any high school graduate applying for college entrance. In any event, the increasing numbers of such disadvantaged pupils are not significant in a test group of nearly a million students.

What we have here is disaster. Perhaps the most disheartening figures have to do with the 20% decline in the number of students scoring at superior levels on the verbal test. This test measures simple literacy--the ability to read, to write, to understand and to communicate. These are fundamental skills, on which all else depends. It is bad enough that mathematical skills are dropping; we are raising children who cannot make change, double a recipe, measure board-feet or calculate miles per gallon. It is worse to raise a generation unable to read and to follow the instructions on a box." (James J. Kilpatrick, "Schools Fail the Test," LOS ANGELES TIMES, Sept. 17, 1975, p. II-7)

ERIC

A LABORATORY APPROACH TO TEACHING "THE BASICS" IN COLLEGE COMPOSITION COURSES

Alma A. Ilacqua, LeMoyne College, Syracuse, New York

"How can I write creatively if I have to observe all sorts of rules of grammar and mechanics? Do the words really matter, so long as I know what I mean? Are form and structure really important? Isn't it the idea that counts? Is it really possible to learn how to write? Isn't writing talent a 'given'?"

Questions like these occur often in college composition courses, chiefly because beginning writers fail to perceive writing as a discipline with its own art and forms. Unlike their professional counterparts, who know that even the best ideas can be weakened by poor grammar and faulty diction, novices view fundamentals as merely restrictive.

In teaching composition, I stress the positive aspects of "the basics." I avoid rote memorization of "rules" and concentrate, instead, on student editing and criticizing of manuscripts-in-progress. Although I employ lecture materials to provide a useful frame of reference and require extensive out-of-class writing to encourage vitally needed practice, I firmly believe that the real business of teaching and learning occurs in workshop sessions. Using the students' own works as laboratory models, I help class members discover that writers communicate most effectively when they observe traditional theories of rhetoric and achieve complete control of grammar and mechanics.

Since I teach many writing courses, from freshman composition to upper-division journalistic and technical forms, I adapt teaching materials to the abilities and vocational interests of students. However, my methodology is fairly consistent. Generally, I begin all courses with diagnostic work, tool practice, lectures, and class exercises. Following this relatively brief orientation phase, I progress, through four separate laboratory segments, to increasingly sophisticated writing and editing experiences. During these workshops, which occupy the majority of class periods, I constantly aim for total student involvement in all aspects of manuscript analysis.

At the first orientation meeting, I ask students to write for thirty or forty minutes. To stimulate thinking, I frequently preface the assignment with a short film or slide presentation on a controversial or dramatic subject. I offer students free choice of topic, mode, and style. From information provided by this preliminary writing, I obtain significant data on levels of creativity, ability to isolate and develop ideas to a logical conclusion, and knowledge of tool skills. I am thus able to plan groupings for later workshops, choose areas for special emphasis in lecture, select writing samples for laboratory use, and prescribe necessary remedial instruction. I find that even the best students need a brief review of the basic rules of grammar and mechanics, while weaker students may require supplemental study in a programmed workbook for part or all of the semester.

For the next two or three orientation meetings while all students are engaged in basic review work, I lecture on writing theory. To help explain the principles of unity, coherence, and emphasis, I utilize transparencies drawn from the students' preliminary writing assignment. I intersperse the illustrated lectures with in-class exercises intended to increase student awareness of material covered in the lectures. Using garbled paragraphs written by former students, I usually obtain lively discussion not only on writing principles but also on grammar, punctuation, diction, and style. I conclude this segment by showing successful rewrites of the sample paragraphs, so that students may compare and evaluate their own revisions.

ERIC

After the lectures and class exercises, I begin the workshop phases. Briefly, the workshops involve in-class student criticism of work written outside of class. Ideally, they evolve from closely-supervised sessions to student-directed projects in which the professor functions chiefly as a roving consultant. Actually, they provide maximum flexibility and a stimulating setting for teaching and learning, as colleagues who have tried the method will attest.

Throughout the course, I try to furnish a diversity of writing experiences. So that students do not endlessly practice one type of writing to the exclusion of all others, I prescribe various modes of discourse, at least for the initial sessions. However, I permit free choice of topics -- an option that often terrifies students. For writers who have difficulty finding "something to write about," I provide dittoed lists of subjects and free access to audio-visual materials.

For the early pattern practices, I limit writing length to one paragraph of at least six sentences. Before class, I read and select six or eight representative samples and duplicate them for workshop study and discussion. Until students develop sufficient professionalism to offer and accept criticism objectively, I do not identify the authors of the workshop selections. At class time, I divide the students into small heterogeneous groups. I ask each group to function as a panel of "experts" for ONE piece of writing and to deliver an oral critique of the assigned piece. I expect each group to read ALL of the other pieces, so that they will be able to react intelligently to the presentations of the "experts." I also request consideration of all aspects of the writing: organization, development, diction, grammar, and mechanics. To guide beginning students, I often provide a checklist designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the opening, the direction of the supportive material, the validity of the conclusion, and numerous technical factors. Although I function as unobtrusively as possible during this first workshop phase, most students realize I influence the character of the learning experience by my choice of writing samples and by my comments on the oral critiques. At this point, they require a good deal of direction, and they welcome it.

In the beginning, only the most discriminating students are able to perceive anything beyond the most flagrant violations of unity or the most obvious abuses against grammar and usage. Most students readily recognize a sentence fragment, a comma splice, and a shift in tense. However, few can isolate, define, and correct misplaced modifiers, inexact parallelism, faulty pronoun reference, and shifting perspective. Even fewer can distinguish between irrelevant tangential observations and bona fide supportive evidence. Almost none can judge which of several synonyms carries precisely the sought for nuance of meaning. Nevertheless, all students benefit from the frequent exposure to a variety of writing problems and from the pedagogy that springs naturally out of the workshop situation. By the close of the first workshop segment, even the most non-verbal are aware of form, structure, language, and mechanics. Moreover, all are eager for more sophisticated workshop experience.

For the second phase, I divide the students into new heterogeneous groups so that they may interact with different writers. This time, they work with their own original manuscripts rather than with selected samples. Before each meeting, I read and evaluate every paper and log my findings in a notebook which I take to class. Such preparation enables me to contribute to each group during class time. In workshop, I function as senior editor, corroborating, correcting, or enlarging upon the students' recommendations.

Unless personality conflicts warrant changes, students remain with the same groups throughout workshop phase two. As they struggle with various writing

problems, they become tightly knit working units. They encourage each other to rewrite, and they cheerfully lend assistance when a troublesome passage needs rephrasing or restructuring. Conversely, they impatiently reprimand students who make the same errors over and over. They tend to be more demanding and critical of each other than I. In striving to impress an editorial board of their peers, they work very hard, often exhibiting tremendous improvement. By the middle of phase two, students are generally working on two- to three-page articles rather than single paragraphs.

Toward the end of this phase and occasionally again before the final phase, I require individual private conferences. Before the conferences, I ask students to re-read all of their writing to date, and to review all criticism of their work. I also ask them to log and analyze their findings. In most cases, students discover their writing reveals distinct patterns of strengths and weaknesses. Often, mere recognition of their tendencies provides the stimulus needed to conquer a flaw or sharpen an ability.

After students have gained some expertise in handling basic writing skills and various modes and lengths, I reorganize them into homogeneous groups. Such division works as well for the gifted writers as for the students who may never be able to achieve more than accuracy and clarity. Homogeneous grouping removes some pressure from the pedestrian writers who, after a certain point, begin to develop feelings of inferiority alongside their more gifted fellows. It also spurs to greater creativity the more capable students who, in the heterogeneous group, may have started to form exaggerated notions of their capabilities. During this phase, I strive to give students maximum responsibility, and I function largely as a roving consultant rather than as a senior editor.

This segment is usually the shortest; yet many students find it the most worthwhile. Some feel it should be longer or should occur earlier; but after experimenting for years with various course structures, I believe its success is due precisely to its brevity and placement. Phase three benefits all students. It helps weak and average writers because, after the orientation sessions and supervised workshops, they are acutely aware of writing principles and grammatical rules, and they need only further practice. It benefits the gifted writers because, by this time, they can handle structure and mechanics automatically; they require only freedom to experiment with form, and competition from other gifted writers.

For the fourth and final phase, I disband the small groups and reorganize into one large workshop. For this segment, I place no limitations on genre, mode, or length. I ask only that each writer have firmly in mind a specific purpose and clearly defined audience, and that he adhere strictly to an agreed schedule of "first drafts," "revisions," and "finished manuscripts." I require students to type their work on ditto masters which must be ready for processing and distribution twenty-four hours before class time. By handling the reading and editing outside of class time, we are able to discuss several manuscripts during each class period.

Each work is presented twice in workshop. The final version is due during examination week and takes the place of a formal final. Although students are required to show only a first draft and one revision, most discover they must rewrite each version several times before presenting it in workshop. Often, they meet informally with other students or with me to discuss work-in-progress.

The schedule of first drafts and revisions is more than a matter of logistics. The process forces each student to pace himself as professional writers must. It allows sufficient working time for writing and rewriting. More important, it provides for the all-important "cooling-off" period that helps writers develop emotional

detachment toward their work.

This open forum format also permits exposure to a greater variety of themes, genres, styles, and writing problems. It provides unlimited opportunity for brainstorming and critical dialogue among writers who, by now, are comfortable with each other and knowledgeable about methodology. Finally, it dramatizes the process of molding and refining raw materials into a finished production.

As students see one paper after another take shape in the various workshop segments, they learn lessons that no amount of study, memorization, or drill can offer. They discover that "the rules" do not inhibit creativity; rather, a facility with "the basics" enhances fancy and increases productivity. They realize that, while content is important, ideas are no guarantors of success. Indeed, they soon appreciate that words, form, and technique "count" a great deal: poorly used, they can demean a great thought; skillfully employed, they can dignify a mediocre one. They find, often with surprise, that writing is not some mysterious alchemy practiced solely by the talented, but that it is sheer hard work. Although they recognize individual differences in aptitudes, they perceive that even the least gifted can, with effort, acquire the skills to communicate accurately and clearly. Best of all, they experience the satisfaction of creating -- through imagination, knowledge, and discipline -- manuscripts that are not merely adequate, but often exemplary.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

Writing about the retirement of Mortimer Smith from the Council for Basic Education, James Kilpatrick summarized Smith's farewell address to the CBE Board. Smith noted that ". . .two overlapping functions must be emphasized in schooling--the acquiring of basic skills and knowledge, and the development of moral sensibility." Smith observed that some people believe the schools "would do well to steer clear of moral affirmation entirely," and then noted, "There are many fraudulent or counterfeit aspects of our private and public lives that could be discussed in social studies classes. We could begin with examination of a common human fraility, the willingness of people who would not steal from each other to steal from the telephone company." (James Kilpatrick, "Mortimer Smith: His Work Merits a Salute," ARIZONA REPUBLIC, Nov. 25, 1974, p. A-6)

"But the point I would stress is that 'relevance'--or 'revelance,' as one still occasionally sees it written and hears it pronounced--is really one of the looser words: it is overworked and overplayed and has become a colossal bore. Let me be clear: I am not maintaining that what is relevant is not central to any intelligent action or thought. In concrete terms, one cannot hope to solve even the simplest practical problem without being able to distinguish what is relevant to the solution from what is not. Or, to move to a higher level of abstraction, the conduct of any intellectual inquiry--philological, literary, historical, scientific, philosophical--is simply inconceivable without separating what is pertinent and appropriate to the investigation from what is not. But the phrases 'to the solution' and 'to the investigation' are the crucial, operative phrases. 'Relevance,' since its birth into English through the legal terminology of sixteenth-century Scotland, has always appeared in contexts where the point of reference is either explicitly stated or clearly understood. Nothing is, or ever has been, or ever will be 'relevant' or 'irrelevant;' something must always be 'relevant' or 'irrelevant' to something. 'Relevance' has become banal precisely because people use it without clearly identifying their frame of reference. When this happens it is a sure sign of fuzzy thinking, or of empty rhetoric; a sign that a speaker or writer isn't really clear about his meaning, and a sign that a hearer or a reader ought to be on guard." (John H. D'Arms, "The Banality of Relevance," CHANGE, April 1974, pp. 36-37)

THE SHORT, UNHAPPY LIFE OF CAREER EDUCATION

John Simmons, Florida State University

You might say that Career Education was doomed from the start--at least as it was touted by some of its rabid proponents back in the early 1970's. What inroads it has made in elementary school curricula I am in no position to judge; probably it has had very little on the little ones or their teachers, as my colleagues in Elementary Education contend. But on content area instruction at secondary grade levels, it appears to have made scarcely a ripple, at least from where I sit.

Not that there aren't some highly worthwhile aspects of the concept. There are indeed. But for most content area teachers in secondary schools, it was the wrong movement, at the wrong time, in the wrong packages and delivered by the wrong hands. And for junior and senior high school English teachers, the tribe to whom I most directly state my contentions, it couldn't have been more badly timed. Here's why I think so.

Fundamentally (get ready to put up your dukes, mes confreres) English is a conservative and academic discipline. While the sciences, for example, must continually reconcile their offerings with the research findings of the moment, English consistently looks to the past for its content. After all, Shakespeare is still big, isn't he (with us, that is), and the Bard died long ago. The Roberts Linguistics series and NEW DIMENSIONS IN ENGLISH are gathering dust on some spacious warehouse shelves while Warriner's was never so popular, at least with the rank and file I know.

But the English teaching gentry has been jumped on plenty recently and much of the stomping has been perpetrated by those who fervently term themselves "innovators." From August Franza (an English teacher once removed) and his "Abolish English" crazies to the reading, media, film study, individualized instruction, transactional analysis, oral-dramatic, etc., etc., freaks, the teacher of English in this country has received a pretty clear mandate: change or die. And, at this dramatic juncture, along comes the Career Ed apostle with an unequivocal message: add it in its spirit! Believe in it, and do something now.

It didn't help matters any that the chairman of the board of these apostles was the then U.S. Commissioner of Education (a Nixon appointee) Sidney D. Marland Jr. who was, as they say, a man possessed about his brainchild. There was no doubt from the beginning that Marland was the champion of this cause. He made it his top priority commitment and doing so, quite unmistakably shoved it down people's throats. Those who were asked to lead the incorporation of the Career Ed spirit into the English curriculum--scholars, teacher educators, supervisors, classroom teachers--weren't recruited; they were threatened with extinction and/or cajoled with some 1984ish claims about the inevitability of Sidney's baby in the educational world of the future.

At a luncheon held for English educators during the 1972 NCTE meeting in Minneapolis, I sat at the head table and caught the full broadside of Mr. Marland's dream. It was an exhortation of the first magnitude winding up in this vein:

> We need humanists to help us elaborate and refine this concept of Career Education. We need humanists to guide our groping for these deeper human concerns on the job and off the job. And it may be that we humanists, ourselves, need such a highly utilitarian exercise to sweep us back into youth and remind us of our original purpose--which is to buttress the spirit with the knowledge that another man, in another time, passed this way before, suffered and joyed as we do, and paid his dues for the magnificent privilege and heavy responsibility of being human, especially in this remarkable land

ERIC

of ours. Neither centuries nor social station can separate us; only our own intellectual myopia can.

Look around. Our beleaguered castle is not really being assaulted by the champions of other disciplines called occupational. They're not attacking our fortress at all. They're just detouring around it, because so many of them, including students, don't think we guard anything worth taking. If we in the humanities continue or regard more 'practical' people as our enemies, and if we continue to be theirs--it will be our own damn fault. (Sidney P. Marland, "Meeting Our Enemies: Career Education the Humanities," ENGLISH JOURNAL, September 1973, p. 906)

What I also remember is that the then commissioner refused to answer questions; he had a plane to catch.

The problem posed by Commissioner Marland with respect to the place of Career Education in public school curricula was far greater than that of his awesome title: in the land of carrots and clubs, he held a lot of carrots. During the 1960's and on into the early 70's, large numbers of college teachers (myself among them), state department bureaucrats, and county officials had become used to the grand game of chasing the federal buck. Grantsmanship, the art of writing proposals adequately seductive for the garnering of federal funds, was a game that large numbers of these educators had learned to play. Thus, when the possibility of receiving federal support for a Career Education undertaking--any undertaking--became evident, large numbers of these veteran proposal writers jumped for the bait, English educators being prominently represented. It is almost impossible to avoid reflecting on the sadness of this situation: people from various fields totally or at least largely unfamiliar with the concept, frivolously scribbling away at pleas for project support. Sadder still is the fact that there really was no field, strictly defined, at the time.

The plight of English educators in the evolution of Career Education may well have been typical, In developing their proposals, they found themselves faced with the necessity for communicating with two groups of people they had previously avoided painstakingly: vocational educators and State Department of Education bureaucrats. The latter group was used to conversing in a language which was clearly foreign to English educators. The former group had long harbored some deep seated resentments about the way in which their status as educators had been perceived by the English teaching profession or, for that matter, by any academic types. This group was well aware of the tradition that the smart, clean, well-dressed kids went into college prep classes in high school, while the dumb shabby ones, went to the shops and got dirt under their fingernails. To say that communication among these three agencies was tentative would be a classic understatement. It would be hard not to be persuaded that only the prospect of federal largesse held them together.

Meanwhile, back at the classroom, secondary school classroom teachers plugged away at their prescribed, exhausting, time consuming tasks. The great thoughts emanating from proposals developed by the unholy alliance described above never reached most of them. Those Career Education ideas, materials, etc., which did not come down were largely in the form of exhortations to infuse Career Ed concepts into current courses of study. These statements were seldom accompanied by suggestions of how to do it or with what.

But classroom teachers of English were used to this by now. During the past ten years or so, they had been harangued about using the "New Rhetoric" in their composition instruction (most hadn't heard much about the Old), replacing traditional grammar with something called "Linguistics," the inclusion of Multi-Ethnic literature, and other such additions to their already bulging programs. In the late 1960's they had been confronted by the demand that they spell out what they were doing in

Behavioral Objectives and that they package their offerings in Individually Prescribed Instruction modules, the Systems approach to becoming Accountable. Some of them even learned the tricks of the trade in writing Behavioral Objectives. It made for lots of fun on in-service days. In other words, just prior to the advent of the Career Education "movement," those embattled teachers had been exposed to a gut full of "innovation." They sensed by now that if they just waited patiently, the thing would undoubtedly go away. After all, what meaningful results of curriculum activities sponsored by professors, or state level educrats had ever really filtered down to them worthy of implementation? Their consistent lack of involvement in such projects had inured them by then.

In a way, the in-service activity in Career Education and the identifying of Career Education "specialists" in State Departments of Education, in county offices, and on school faculties to conduct them were the most laughable of all the nuances to which secondary English teachers had been exposed. Guidance counselors, curriculum coordinators, reading specialists--these they could usually tolerate. At least such individuals could generally be expected to have come from respectable, well organized graduate level training programs offered by educational psychologists, reading authorities, and university instructors experienced in curriculum supervision and development. None of these credentials could be applied to Career Education "specialists" at any level. Typically, a vocational education person or a minor guidance official was chosen, both hastily and arbitrarily, and was dubbed with CE title. He/she was given some sketchily organized, badly written CE "literature," asked to assimilate some of the jargon, and sent forth to indoctrinate curriculum supervisors and classroom teachers in the ways of this new educational wonder drug. Most English teachers hung in there; they were aware of the past, and in this case, were persuaded that matter could neither be created or destroyed.

Probably the greatest single factor in the quick impending downfall of Career Education was the onslaught of proclamations by its champions of some tragically grandiose ideals. I use the possibily infelicitous phrase "tragically grandiose" because I feel that they were just that. Consider what some of the fundamental aims of Career Education are:

1. The reconciling of immediate curricular benefits with the long range--well coordinated Career Education components in units of study could assist the teacher in responding to the "what good is this stuff?" query which kids often pose.
2. The reconciling of vocational matters with those largely academic--the value of study in various content areas to "real world" activities in which careers of several kinds are related to traditional subject matter.
3. The reconciling of certain "practical" activities with those usually considered to be intellectual--in English, for instance, the incorporation of such considerations as values clarification, decision making, self identification, and vocational (broadly conceived) awareness into the study of literature and composition.

All these are broad, humanistic goals and certainly worthy of thought. Many English teachers, however, felt that they had been involved in activities which realized those goals for years and thus didn't need a bunch of ersatz instructional packages, larded with inflated, quasi-technical language, to assist in the further development of their offerings. They were especially skeptical when the outsiders who were doing the purveying turned out to be retreaded vocational education teachers, themselves manifestly uncomfortable in the groves of academe.

If English teachers felt uncomfortable with the foisting of this curricular savior on them, so were their academic counterparts. Science teachers, filled with a passionate zeal to "keep up with the things," found no way to fit Career Ed matters into their already overcrowded curricula. Math teachers, who were in the midst of devising strategies for making the abstract concepts of their discipline both relevant

and challenging, dismissed these nuances as trivial. So Career Education had no luck in finding a champion within the ranks of established secondary academic programs, and the prospects for its finding one now are looking dimmer by the hour.

What might Career Education have to offer to a secondary English curriculum? Maybe some important things if its more fanatical apostles would desist in assuming certain postures and look the real world of the secondary curriculum straight in the eye. After all, the three ideals described a few paragraphs back speak to some unarguably significant issues. Problems which young people face in getting a job, in considering the pragmatic value of a college education, were never more intense than they are today. Perspective on approaches used in the incorporation of Career Education activity into English is the big factor, and the sketchily developed, intellectually thin components offered to English teachers in the past five years are not nearly concise or challenging enough to meet the needs. In my years of teaching, I've heard a lot of complaining by classroom teachers about the lack of practicality and relevance of too many inservice workshops. Career Education must rid itself of this stigma.

There first needs to be an honest joining of ranks of those Career Education school officials who still remain with the high school English departments which are expected to present these components in the classroom. Organizing workshops, largely lecture or slide-tape in nature, for entire faculties on the broad concept of CE must be brought to an abrupt halt. Teachers of English need to identify these broad concepts (self-identification, adult world values, etc.) as represented or potentially representable in their own courses of study. They then need the time and the materials the latter of their own choice or construction, to refine these components further. A careful incorporation of these broader goals into literature and composition activity may give those activities, more direction, and compatibility, with contemporary life; in short, it may assist in leading English into Neil Postman's promised land of relevance.

The self-identification goal is especially pertinent here. This has always been the main theme in well written adolescent fiction as well as the literature of initiation as has been spelled out in the studies of Dorothy Petitt (1961) and Hugh Agee (1965) and the more recent one by Alfred Muller (1973). Initiation of the adolescent into the real world of adult society is one of the great, continuing themes of American literature and its tie-in with career considerations should be both easy and exciting.

Next, the English teacher should stick to his/her knitting, leaving alone those areas which he/she is not professionally prepared and has no interest. Information about the wide world of occupations and job training programs for young people are important matters of concern. They should be handled by those vocational education specialists and guidance counselors whose business it is to know about them. Of course, interesting aspects of careers can be touched on and considered during literature study, but the teacher of English who is intent on making his/her study relevant to kids' needs will do this almost instinctively. No guilding or extraneous lillies, please.

Some teachers who are so inclined and equipped may wish to try some Improvised Dramatic activities in building career concepts both in literature and composition. The dramatization of "life situations" may provide both readiness and reinforcement dimensions for the study of literature. They may provide stimuli for composition development as well. To create dramatic situations which, when enacted, effectively relate career concepts to literary and rhetorical insights requires both time and special aptitude. A course in the medium from Dorothy Heathcote might help those teachers who wish to give it a whack.

It is in the areas of reading and certain communication skills, however, that I feel the best efforts in Career Education should be concentrated. I say "certain communication skills" rather than written composition because of the very real need for instruction in practical matters such as note taking (from reading and listening), outlining, summarizing, and relating details. These are surely relatable to composition activity but are not subsumed in the motivational approaches to writing currently being advocated by such highly persuasive authorities as Richard Larson, Bruce Lockerbie, James McCrimmon, Walker Gibson, John Ashmead, et al. Those aspects of writing listed above are necessary, need to be taught directly, and are generally useful in "practical" (expository) writing. Thus maybe career topics can help form the content basis for their instructional development.

In regard to reading instruction, one doesn't have to be a specialist to know that you don't read reading, you read something. The choice of materials through which reading abilities can be refined and extended is really a fairly arbitrary one and therefore materials related to career development may be more appropriate than literature in several instances, especially in that they may more effectively meet the immediate needs of large numbers of senior high school students.

The "something" students read can be of clearly long range value in literary works. This is not true, however, of the use of the essay. Failure to recognize this fact has caused hosts of traditionally minded teachers to assign such turkeys to today's adolescents as "A Dissertation on a Roast Pig," "Oxford As I See It," and "The Gettysburg Address." Such old timers are not turning the youth today on and surely have no utilitarian value. The use of career materials could do much to put the reading of non-fiction in its proper perspective--that of primarily instrumental value to young people. "What does it tell you that you need to know?" is a question which young people should be trained to ask about non-fiction. Career materials could well become the basis for such reading comprehension activity.

The use of career materials, as well as the acquainting of adolescents with several aspects of the real world of adult responsibility, can be used to help these young people to build the reading skills they may well need upon graduation, such as finding main ideas, relating supporting details, following directions, using referential word attack skills, separating fact from opinion, and cross-referencing, to name just a few. A direct attack on reading and the communication skills previously described is, in my judgment, the way to go, and career oriented materials may just offer us the best stuff around for directing this attack.

The above would seem to be the best ways for Career Education to fit into the secondary English curriculum. Career Education, as indicated earlier, may well be just one more educational fad. Some of us older types have seen plenty of them over the years. This one has already had some rough going and may not make it, but it has kind of a noble ring which should not be peremptorily dismissed. My suggestions for its incorporation into English are surely not radical-revolutionary. The use of career materials in reading and communication skills, for instance, are modest. They offer one set of potentially relevant activities in one academic area--English. My ultimate proposal is that we take what Career Education has to offer us in helping to give direction to the study of English before we summarily throw out its spirit with the bath water.

BACK TO THE BASICS WITH POETRY

Sallee Clements, Arizona State University

The currently popular back-to-basics discussion has me wondering, a bit warily I must confess, what will happen to poetry. Being the genre least liked by most students, and some teachers, and considered arcane by many, poetry may be judged a frill--and dropped. It shouldn't be! If we would teach the basics of poetry, we could demonstrate just how very effective poetry is in teaching those basics so many people are urging us to get back to. Grammar, reading, and writing skills are in turn supposed to enable students to become intelligent consumers: constructive members of a democratic society able to comprehend and evaluate the seemingly chaotic and endless sales pitch which their culture has become. Consequently, and ideally, the packaging of political, social, and commercial images will be transparent. Disciples waiting for Godot will be reduced to a tolerable minimum; rhinoceroses will be only in zoos. Poetry can help achieve this consumer goal, too.

Sweeping claims? Not really! The basics of poetry take students below the surface of a poem, beyond their emotional reactions of "I do/don't like it. It makes me think of the time I. . ." (Too often, students never get beyond these reactions, turning class discussion into a bull session and losing the experiences of the poem in a welter of pseudo-related personal information.) Studying the organization of ideas, purpose and effectiveness of a poem's concreteness, imagery, tone, unity, prosody, emphatic and emotional devices: all can reinforce and carry over to reading and writing skills. Determining the subject, verb, modifiers, and so forth, as one analyzes placement and its relation to meter, sound, and tone can be not only a challenging exercise in reading accuracy but also a reinforcing exercise in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and other reading and writing skills. Since I hold to the liberal arts belief that persons having exposure to a variety of knowledge are better able to cope with their environment, I believe poetry not only enhances the basics but also provides an opportunity for societal and personal insight, a gas and money saving option for leisure time, and, finally but necessary in our anxious contemporary society, an opportunity to experience joy.

Granted, students aren't going to say, "Oh, goody--prosody!" Some of us remember with distaste our own high school or college experiences with poetry: We were considered dull clods if, after memorizing terms and their definitions, we were unable to scan a poem or recognize the "inherent" beauty of an image. Nevertheless, the basics of poetry, as well as being instructive, can be intriguing and enjoyable.

In teaching reluctant students the basics of poetry, I first assure them that they may refer to their class notes and dittoes when they explicate a poem. Eliminating memorization eliminates detail for detail's sake and allows the students to focus on creating a whole, a whole composed of parts not just confined to poetry but applicable to basic skills and life as well. I further assure the class that a poem can have more than one interpretation and that they are not to waste time second-guessing my opinion. Such an assurance allows them to concentrate on comprehending the process of explication and its relation to the world around them. Finally, I assure them that I will not forget their inexperience with the process but that I do expect improvement with practice. The only restriction I make is to confine their explication to the poem itself. They are to consider the experiences of the poem, not their own: personal experiences with horses, snow, <u>etc</u>. are not to creep into their discussion of the speaker's experiences in Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." If Frost is successful, his poem will enhance their understanding of themselves and their world and enrich their own experiences. I reassure the class frequently and repeat the restriction when necessary.

My reassurances alone, however, will not remove the skeptical looks. Acquainting the class with an explication format and some poetic devices provides them with additional security. To be certain each student has the information, I give them dittoes of the format and of metrical and sound devices. A format which I have found quite successful (not to be confused with THE format) is as follows:

I. The experience--the subject of the poem (not the theme or idea).
  A. the situation which is described or narrated
  B. the speaker, who should be considered a persona (the poet is not always the speaker)

II. The strategy--the poet's blueprint, so to speak.
  A. organization--what is the progression of situation and/or thought, the ordering of ideas/events
  B. concreteness--by what means, or formula, has the poet made the thought specific in order to arouse his reader
  C. quality and function of the imagery--what is the purpose of the images, how do they work to achieve the purpose, do they effectively do it, do they contribute to organization and concreteness

III. Special metrical effects--particularly those of an emphasizing and intensifying sort (substitutions, variations, etc.)

IV. Tone
  A. sound effects--vowels, consonants, alliteration, etc.
  B. word choice--arrangement of words within a phrase, or phrases within a sentence, as well as individual words
  C. rhythm

V. Unity--consistency in imagery, tone, thought, and feeling. The poem should have no shifts which fail to support the whole. Shifts in imagery, tone, etc. are fine if they support.

VI. Controlling idea (essentially a generalized statement of Part I which includes the speaker's attitude toward the subject). Thus: the experience in Ferlinghetti's "Constantly Risking Absurdity" is being a poet. The controlling idea is writing poetry is an art. (This section would be incorporated into I. in a written explication)

VII. Evaluation--consider such criteria as significance, artistic skill, philosophical depth, originality of insight, depth of feeling. Thus, the poem states a rather commonplace idea, but the poet's skill presents it in a fresh context which enhances a reader's insight.

In discussing the format, I begin with parts III and IV, using metrical and sound effect dittoes. Most everyone has his favorite lines for illustrating sound and meter; however, I have found nursery rhymes to be quite effective: the students are generally familiar with them, and they feel free to exaggerate the devices, which should be done to feel the effect and to accustom the ear. "Hickory, Dickory, Dock" illustrates dactylic foot and substitution just as well as any "real" poem. The humor involved seems to relieve whatever self-consciousness and tension the students might feel.

Encouraging the class to offer their own examples is, of course, reinforcement and allows discussion of examples generally considered outside the scope of poetry. Proverbs, favorite or cliche sayings, slang, advertising slogans: all give the students practice in hearing distinct meters and in considering the emotional and emphatic effects. "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should": the dactylic line rushes ahead giving an upbeat tempo to which one's ear reacts cheerfully. The stresses fall precisely on the words the adman wants remembered as a single concept: Winston-good-cig-should. The repetition of the slogan suggests an urgency which can be translated into a subconscious demand.

Another metrical illustration to which students respond is listening to their own speech and then emphasizing their stressed syllables, trying to recognize types

of feet. Before this exercise becomes chaotic, I give the students a sentence with instructions to vary the stress and consider the tone changes: What are you going to do; what are you going to do, etc. This exercise helps to clarify how the predominant meter of a poem can direct the meter of a specific line which could be read variously.

Returning to Winston or some other slogan, I shift the discussion to sound effects and their contribution to meter, rhythm, emphasis, and emotion. The sound effect ditto lists, defines, and exemplifies the devices: the standard ones of alliteration, assonance, etc., and the less frequently noted ones of consonant and vowel qualities (harsh, soft, long, short). Applying these qualities to the Winston slogan shows that the stressed syllables of the dactylic meter--by being composed of vowels, consonants and combinations which have long, slow, and soft qualities--strengthen and become favorably persuasive. Having the class say the slogan aloud demonstrates the difficulty of saying quickly the words upon which the stresses fall: "Winston" quickens by eliminating the n or t; "good" and "should" can be hurried only by concentrated force; "cigarette" speeds up by swallowing the a--and even then the voiced g within still forces a slowing of pronunciation. The deliberately slow rhythm and soft tone impress and persuade the hearer.

We then switch to orally examining other sounds and combinations. Chaotic as it sounds, the exercise fascinates and amuses students, who generally have never before considered syllabic sound effect. I find popular songs also illustrate meter and sound quite lucidly. Although the correspondence between musical notation and meter or consonant/vowel qualities is not exact, the students, especially the musicians among them, are intrigued. Returning to ads, nursery rhymes, etc. provides transition to rhyme, alliteration, and the more standard sound effects. Obviously, these exercises can continue indefinitely; however, I usually begin applying the format to a specific poem when I sense the students generally comprehend the metrical and sound effects and have satisfied some of their exuberance.

As a specific guide, I distribute a dittoed explication. L. Ferlinghetti's "Constantly Risking Absurdity"and Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum est" are two poems about which a great deal can be said to illustrate the major divisions of the format and most of the sound, rhythm, and metrical devices and to give the students some experience with free verse. The students find the imagery in both poems captivating. Some other poems which provide a comprehensive starting point are Frost's "Departmental," Auden's "The Unknown Citizen," Alastair Reid's "Curiosity." D.H. Lawrence's "City Life," Siegfried Sassoon's "Base Details." I like to begin with these poems because they readily relate to the students' world.

The following explication (which in deference to copyright laws, is not one of my "usual" poems) is a condensed illustration of the more detailed explication I hand to the students. (For teachers who might be a bit rusty, two helpful handbooks on metrics, terms, and poetry in general are: Thrall, Hibbard and Holman, A HANDBOOK TO LITERATURE, rev. ed., NY: Odessey, 1960; an absolutely indispensible book for any literature teacher; and Deutsch's POETRY HANDBOOK, 2nd ed., NY: Grosset, 1962.) Parenthetical portions comprise representative digressions and correlations I make as we discuss the explication and relate the explication to basic skills and cultural insights.

The Latest Decalogue

by Arthur Hugh Clough

Thou shalt have one God only; who
Would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be
Worshipped, except the currency.

Swear not all; for, for thy curse
Thine enemy is none the worse.
At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world thy friend.
Honor they parents; that is, all
From whom advancement may befall.
Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive
Officiously to keep alive.
Do not adultery commit;
Advantage rarely comes of it.
Thou shalt not steal: an empty feat,
When it's so lucrative to cheat.
Bear not false witness; let the lie
Have time on its own wings to fly.
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition
Approves all forms of competition.

The experience of the poem (Part I) arises from the speaker's concern that people are not adhering to God's commandments. (Poet lived 1819-61; how does the experience compare to today?)

The speaker organizes his concern (Part II) by stating in a couplet each aspect of the situation. Within the couplet, the first line gives the Christian ideal; the second gives the contemporary application. The means by which the speaker's thought is made concrete is to use the Ten Commandments as the ordering principle. This particular means arouses the reader since most people in Western Civilization are familiar with the Commandments and, even if they don't follow them for themselves, grant them some respect. The resulting contrast between the ideal of the Commandments and the actual application is forceful.

The imagery, for the most part, is uncomplicated: Currency becomes a graven image to be worshipped; world is personified as friend; personified tradition gives its approval; and a lie has "wings to fly." The images are not starling; they verge on cliché. Their very ordinariness emphasizes the non-thinking, self-serving response to the awful event of God commanding and strengthens the contrast between the ideal and the actual. (I correlate this illustration to magazine ads which I bring to class. We discuss the overall organization, the controlling idea, the concreteness, and the images. A helpful book about advertising and composition is A. McQuade & R. Atwan, POPULAR WRITING IN AMERICA, NY: Oxford U. Press, 1974. After isolating these points, we discuss ways in which they support each other. Another useful correlation is to discuss ways in which a prose essay could develop from the ordering of the poem--in this instance a comparison/contrast essay.)

A special metrical effect (Part III) in this poem is substitution which occurs in the first two feet of the first line: two spondaic feet are used rather than the iambic foot which occurs throughout the poem. After four strong stresses in a row, the inclination is to place no stress on the next syllable. Consequently, God is de-emphasized, a subtle and ironic effect.

A second special metrical effect derives from the meter. Even though meter is usually an aspect of tone, the relentlessness with which the iambic foot is used in the poem can constitute a special effect. It emphasizes a non-thinking, a rote quality. Both effects, substitution and relentless iambic feet, serve to de-emphasize the importance of the Ten Commandments.

(Here, discussion of understatement techniques and their contribution to humor, irony, and satire can lead to a discussion of similar advertising techniques and the

ways in which advertising subtly persuades through appeal to urbanity and sophistication /among other appeals/. A special visual effect of a "Nature" line of cosmetics would be the woodland setting in which the lovely girl sits or the spray of wild flowers she might be holding--both serving to emphasize "natural." The eye-patch worn by the man in the Hathaway shirt emphasizes the idea of sophistication and urbanity. Correspondences can also be drawn to any previous prose readings which provide examples of understatement.)

The tone (Part IV) in "The Latest Decalogue" is satirical. The irony developed by the contrast between the ideal and the actual, between God's commands and man's shifts, between the awesome Commandments and the cliché-like evasions creates through accumulation a form of exaggeration which becomes satirical. It is this ironic-satirical tone which informs the audience of the speaker's stand on the matter. The sounds create a commonplace and sonorous effect. Sound effects such as alliteration and assonance are used no more than they would be used in conversation. In general, the vowels and consonants are so placed to slow pronunciation. The rhyme combined with the sonorous conversational effects emphasizes these effects to such a degree that the couplets, and the Commandments they are discussing, are given a doggeral effect, which further emphasizes the contemporary lack of importance attached to the Commandments.

The word choice further slows the reading and contributes a ponderous, officious, pompous effect. Phrases are placed to create a latinate sentence structure, "At church on Sunday to attend," since normal word order gives the line more speed. The phrasings in the second line of each couplet are hackneyed, stereotyped, or cliché: e.g. "advancement may befall." The pompous, self-serving rote manner in which God's Commandments are twisted and broken is satirically exposed.

The previously noted relentless iambic meter and the accompanying sound effects and word choice which slow this meter combine to create a rhythm suggesting self-serving, pompous rationalizations. This rhythmic effect contrasts with the audience's expectation of the spondaic strength with which the Commandments are customarily stated. The resulting tension between the expectation and the actual delivery corresponds with the other contrasts already established and words to create dismay (at the very least) on the audience's part. (The effect of deliberately induced tensions in advertising can be examined at this point. Discrepancies between culturally induced ideal images and the implication of failure if a certain product is not used is a common device. Some digression into various cultural ideals is helpful not only for discerning commercial, social, and political persuasion but in providing foundations for irony, satire, and literature in general. Further digression into connotations can create awareness which gives students more conscious control of their own writing by helping them to examine their own assumptions and those of their audiences. Books on language awareness are plentiful; one of my favorites is S.I. Hayakawa's LANGUAGE IN THOUGHT AND ACTION /3rd ed., NY: Harcourt, 1972/. Another excellent one is LANGUAGE AWARENESS /Paul A. Eschotz, Alfred F. Rosa, Virginia P. Clark, NY: St. Martins, 1974/)

The strategy, metrical effects, and tone: all combine to create a satiric whole (Part V). The contrasts of the ideal and actual and the expectation and delivery reveal the puny, self-serving evasions of contemporary man. These contrasts and evasions reduce and deride contemporary man's behavior, leaving the ideal exposed in its simple majesty. (Here, of course, is an ideal spot to make correspondences to prose writing, advertising, etc.)

The experience of the poem, as stated, is contemporary man's failure to follow the Ten Commandments. The controlling idea of the poem (Part VI), then, comprises the failure to follow the Ten Commandments that stems from non-thinking and pompously

self-serving actions. (In helping the students to comprehend the distinction between experience and controlling idea, I refer to the composition basics/of general ideas and particular ideas, the general statement and the specific example. Here, also, I introduce the students to Hayakawa's well-known abstraction ladder to illustrate the general/specific, controlling idea/particular experience concepts. Advertising, editorials, even job application forms can further illustrate abstraction and the general/specific process which can mislead, intentionally or unintentionally, through failure to provide specifics, the experience, for the generality.)

"The Lastest Decalogue" is relevant to contemporary life (Part VII). We see all around us examples of the specifics cited in the poem, to such an extent that the poet runs the risk of stating the obvious. However, the well worn condemnations gain a fresher perspective when one realizes the poem was written more than 100 years ago. The Commandment twisting which the poem exposes is not a reflection of the decadence of twentieth century ethics but rather a revelation of an enduring weakness in human nature within Western Civilization. The particularly striking aspect of the poem is the poet's skill in controlling the ironic working of each of the separate elements and unifying them into a larger ironic statement, which as a result of the unification becomes satire. The poet's skill has unified the many contradictions into a cumulative effect which exposes and ridicules and which ultimately aims to correct man's failure to follow God's commandments. (This section allows the students to state their own opinions of the poem based in their own knowledge and experience. Some students will consider the shift of focus to human nature a fresh insight--it is an idea which had not occured to them before. Some will consider the poem trite, the only redeeming feature being what they can perceive of the poet's skill. And some will believe that the ironic satire, and the resulting humor, lends a freshness to what are usually intense and dire pronouncements. Discussing the various evaluations helps to strengthen the students' awareness of audience--that essential component of writing. It also demonstrates how analysis can provide support for opinion.)

After the elaborations and discussions pertaining to the explication, we read and explicate at random. To some poems we orally apply the entire explication process. For other poems we work with only one or two divisions of the process or with devices within a division. This practice is easily accomplished regardless of the organizational mode of the unit--thematic, genre, <u>etc</u>. I give as much time as possible to specific student requests.

As soon as the students have a fairly comfortable acquaintance with the elements of explication, I give them a final ditto which cites some bad poems and poetic lines. The exposure sharpens their ability to evaluate a poem or an element and provides relaxing laughter. In addition to my favorite bad examples, THE STUFFED OWL (D. B. Wyndam Lewis and Charles Lee. N.Y.: Capricorn, 1962) cites numerous hilarious examples, such as Ruskin's <u>seriously</u> intended apostrophe to his heart: "Oh, rest, thou little bounder." In "The Wind," Alfred Austen misuses alliteration; what was intended seriously becomes comic: "I fling the fisherman's flaccid corpse/At the feet of the fisherman's wife." The Earl of Litton ("Love and Sleep") creates an unintentional reaction: "Her smile was silent as the smile on corpses three hours old." Mrs. Browning ("Wine of Cyprus") could have paid more attention to word choice and phrasing: "Our Euripedes, the human,/with his dropping of warm tears." Such examples as these illustrate, oftentimes, better than a well-written poem, the difficult concept of unity: each element enhancing the other elements and supporting the controlling idea. Also, these examples, in their disunity, help many students to better grasp the concepts of irony and satire.

Periodically, I assign an explication, written out of class to allow enough thinking time. Giving the students four or five poems from which they choose one

poem to explicate seems most effective: they can select the poem which they feel best able to handle. The following day, after the explications are collected, we discuss the poems. Such assignments build the students' confidence in their ability and allow me to pinpoint general and specific weaknesses for emphasis in class. The unit examination is simply another explication, written out of class, but one in which the students try to demonstrate all that they have learned. In every explication, whether written or oral, I insist the students provide specific examples of their general statements and give a statement or two clarifying how the example does indeed illustrate the generality. In the evaluations, they are permitted to measure the experience and insight of the poem against their own experiences and insights. The end result is increased ability and confidence in: reading perceptively; analyzing; evaluating; supporting general statements; discerning connotations, abstractions, and persuasive devices; and applying learnings to other areas. The explications provide writing practice for the students and an opportunity for me to help them (via comments and corrections on their papers) with grammar, mechanics, sentence structure, or any other writing difficulty they might have. More general results are an increased awareness of the world around them and the ability to pierce commercial, societal, and political facades. The increased awareness and confidence prods the students to question, to analyze, to perceive: to be constructive, intelligent consumers. A final bonus arises simply from their increased ability to read and understand poetry: they have become confident in their acquaintance with poetry and continue, to greater or lesser degrees, to read it. (Some even venture to write it.) A former student, a football player, seems to illustrate the joy that can be achieved by eliminating the fear of, and unfamiliarity with poetry: Stopping to discuss some poems he had "discovered," he commented on the relaxation which reading poetry gave him and how "neat" he felt when he read a phrase which aptly summed up an experience of his. And, thus, when I hear the phrase "back-to-basics," I say, "Fine! But, don't forget that poetry can be an effective tool for getting there!"

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"If the current attack upon culture is, as I believe, an attempt to negate the idea of a meaningful past, then teachers must examine what it is they actually think about our culture. We must discuss the proper limits of our task. Are we warriors standing at the walls of the besieged city, waiting for the final assault? Are we confused pallbearers, who do not even know that what we are burying is our own reality? Are we destroying that which has offered meaning to our own lives, even when that meaning has been more threatening than we acknowledge?

. . .

The past exists and our students exist. And they need each other, because the past ceases to live when it is unknown, while the present, divorced from the past, is reduced to a calculus of convenience. I have faith in the ability of a few of our students--and it has never been more than a few in any generation--to come to terms with the best of what has been thought and written if we present them the literary record without apology. Our responsibility ends there. They will take what they can, leave what they cannot see.

. . .

One can still feel the richness and the terror of the world that came before us. Literature gives us that, and it is what we can give our students. There is much to be said for such continuity. Literature is restless and probing: it does not heal. But it needs no apologies. Teaching it is a meaningful and defined endeavor, and teaching literature in a time such as ours may provide the student with a way of resisting a manipulative environment. To pick and choose from the record of the past is not the same as creating monuments. But to help the student pick and choose is to achieve a great deal--far more, I suspect, than we realize." (Leonard Kriegel, "Culture and the Classroom," CHANGE, Winter 1974, pp. 46, 48)

ERIC

YELLOWED ROAD MAPS AND REARVIEW MIRRORS: A MEANS OF APPROACHING THE BASICS

R. Baird Shuman, Duke University

Just so you'll know something about me and how I think

_______ITEM: I don't never flunk a kid in English just because he uses double negatives;

_______ITEM: I ain't nevver met a bad speler I didn't like;

_______ITEM: I'm glad I got turned down for the Navy after all them nasty things that Admiral Rickover had to say about we English teachers;

_______ITEM: The way I figure language is to communicate with so what the hell if the commas get lost in the shuffle;

_______ITEM: Some lousy supervisor--a real square old bat like shoulda been married to Pat Boone--said I shouldn't be teaching junior high school English, so I had to move to a college (where I'm still at, although a diffrunt one now).

So after I left that junior high in Philly, like because I didn't have nothing better to do, I filled in my time writin' articles and things--like I found a whole safe full of manuscripts in a jerkwater town in rural N.J., and nobody never published them before so I published some of them.

And waddaya think? Things ain't changed much like since the Dark Ages. Waddaya mean wadda I mean? They ain't! Like I come to this one manuscript by the big N.W.--Noah Webster. No *&!%$! He's 31 at the time and musta had his nose in a book for the last 25 yrs studing, but now he's hung up on this chick, Becky Greenleaf, I guess a real looker and only 23 yrs old--but someone told me in them days if you weren't married by 18 they thought you was a old maid. (My edition of this letter appeared in my article entitled "Noah Webster's Marriage Announcement," MANUSCRIPTS, Summer 1960, pp. 32-34. The date of the letter, addressed to Webster's new brother-in-law, James Greenleaf, was 28 October 1789, at which time Webster was eleven years out of Yale; had served in the Revolutionary army; had taught school /"in various places"--maybe some supervisor bugged him/ for four years; had completed Parts I, II, and III of his GRAMMATICAL INSTITUTE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, Part I of which later became known as WEBSTER'S SPELLING BOOK or BLUE-BACKED SPELLER and sold like hotcakes for over 100 years; had written a political treatise entitled SKETCHES OF AMERICAN POLICY; and had given lectures on the English language which resulted in the publication of his masterful DISSERTATIONS ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, published in the year of his marriage to the aforementioned Ms. Greenleaf.)

So why did I tell ya all that in the note above? Well, mostly on account of--you'll bust a gut laughin' at this one, so get ready--in the letter he wrote in his own hand to his brother-in-law he spelled three words wrong and once--don't ask me how--slipped into black dialect cause he wrote "Becca send her love to you." I know it sounds crazy, man, but I gave ya the refrence ya can check it out.

So what's that prove? Well, not a helluva lot I guess except I found alot of other letters and things like two by "Big Hank"--you know, Henry David Thoreau like it says on his diploma from Harvard. So I read them and man was they a mess. My bonehead freshmen wasn't much better except they had something to say. Thoreau? He wrote this thing--man, I don't know why I'm even tellin' ya cause you're not gonna believe it--that he called "Passage on the 'Frozen-Thawed' Apple" and this other thing--are ya ready?--he called "Of Books and Their Titles." (My editions of these two hitherto unpublished Thoreau essays are to be found in the EMERSON SOCIETY QUARTERLY, No. 18, 1960, pp. 25-39.) Talk about jazzy titles! Man, these were from nowhere.

But gettin' back to the original subject, like Big Hank couldn't spell neither, so what does that prove? He got better eventually, like after he was out of college, man. Like he taught himself or something. Cool. Or maybe got him a secretary.

So I don't talk or write like that anymore. But that fact has little to do with my being taught the basics. Somewhere along the way something happens to some people and they change their styles to accommodate their audiences. They adapt, having learned the first fundament of survival.

________ITEM: "The new education must teach the individual how to classify and reclassify information, how to evaluate its veracity, how to change categories when necessary, how to move from the concrete to the abstract and back, how to look at problems from the new direction--how to teach himself. Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the man who can't read; he will be the man who has not learned how to learn." (Herbert Gerjuoy as quoted in Alvin Toffler's FUTURE SHOCK, NY: Random House, 1970, p. 414.)

________ITEM: "The intellectual as a champion of the masses is a relatively recent phenomenon. Education does not naturally waken in us a concern for the uneducated. The distinction conferred by education is more easily maintained by a sharp separation from those below than by a continued excellence of achievement." (Eric Hoffer, THE ORDEAL OF CHANGE, NY: Harper, 1964, p. 43.)

________ITEM: "Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic, and political organizations, and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else." (Frederick H. Harbison, HUMAN RESOURCES AS THE WEALTH OF NATIONS, NY: Oxford U Press, 1973, p. 3.)

________ITEM: "In our educational policy as a nation, we refuse to let live. We persuade through fear. But there is a great difference between compelling a child to cease throwing stones and compelling him to learn Latin. Throwing stones involves others; but learning Latin involves only the boy. The community has the right to restrain the antisocial boy. . . but the community has no right to compel the boy to learn Latin--for learning Latin is a matter for the individual." (A.S. Neill, SUMMERHILL: A RADICAL APPROACH TO CHILD REARING, NY: Hart Publishing Company, 1970, pp. 114-15.)

________ITEM: "Community and students are the two resources least used by public education from kindergarten through junior college. Since the community is not composed of qualified educators, it cannot be called upon for more than money and nominal supervision. Both arguments are as specious as they are obvious, but their speciousness seems to be clearer at a distance than it is nearby." (Daniel Fader, THE NAKED CHILDREN, NY: Macmillan, 1971, p. 160.)

________ITEM: "The largest fact which we must face is that a very great number of Negro and Puerto Rican youth are not learning to read well enough to use reading for other learning. . . in the urban ghettos it is the normally intelligent, well-adjusted, well-spoken boy who reads very badly. By 'well-adjusted' I mean fitting in naturally to the social setting of the neighborhood." (William Labov, THE STUDY OF NON-STANDARD ENGLISH, Champaign, IL: NCTE, 1970, pp. 42-3.)

________ITEM: "...in the United States the class that has historically been most committed to progress (the upper-middle classes and especially their

children) is becoming disillusioned with technological and even economic progress to a growing degree. Advancing technology and economic growth, once thought of as desirable goals and signs of achievement, are coming to be regarded as villains." (Herman Kahn and B. Bruce-Briggs, THINGS TO COME: THINKING ABOUT THE SEVENTIES, NY: Macmillan, 1972, p. 206.)

_______ITEM: "...education can be either a constructive or a destructive force. It can develop people whose skills are strategic or useless for economic growth; it can help select persons for leadership roles who may promote progress or impose stagnation; it can favor the rich and discriminate against the poor; it can build a work-oriented mentality; it can free the mind or strangle it with indoctrination; it can energize people or it can destroy their initiative. Conceivably it could even be irrelevant in shaping today's society." (Harbison, HUMAN RESOURCES, p. 54.)

_______ITEM: "/Teachers/ need a value confrontation that will help to shatter the complacency we /teacher trainers/ have so carefully nurtured. They need a thorough grasp of the capabilities of modern technology as it relates to the learning process...They need communication skills so as to communicate effectively with all youth and adults, not just those of similar backgrounds. The lessons of living--of morality, of discipline, of commitment to ideals--must be as central as basic studies." (James Dunworth, "A New Design for Teacher Education," AACTE BULLETIN, December 1974, p. 5.)

_______ITEM: "...the schools are still the principal source of the idea that literacy is equated with intelligence. Why, the schools even promote the idea that spelling is related to intelligence! Of course, if any of this were true, reading teachers would be the smartest people around. One doesn't mean to be unkind, but if that is indeed the case, no one has noticed." (Neil Postman, "The Politics of Reading," HARVARD EDUCATIONAL REVIEW, May 1970, pp. 244-52.)

_______ITEM: "Books suitable for children must seem very simple to an adult... teachers and others who select books for children usually select books suitable for themselves. This mistake is almost universal at all levels. College books are suitable for college professors. High school books are suitable for high school teachers, and most grade school books are suitable for the teachers rather than for the children." (Edward William Dolch, PROBLEMS IN READING, Champaign, IL: The Garrard Press, 1948, p. 4.)

_______ITEM: Knowing that my readers would be English teachers, I titled by paper metaphorically. (Actually, much of the paper is a metaphor.)

- - - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"/California/ Superintendent of Public Instruction Wilson Riles, who appointed the panel /the California Commission for the Reform of Intermediate and Secondary Education, or PROJECT RISE/, traces these problems to 'schools that are still in the last century' and that are 'insensitive to the various learning styles of youngsters.'

His theory is that students should be brought more quickly into the adult world. 'We treat them like children too long,' he said. 'We do not realize they are young adults, they want responsibility. Two generations ago, when society was less complex, they had roles to play. Now we just shunt them off to school. It's bound to lead to boredom.'" ("A Revolution in Public Education," LOS ANGELES HERALD-EXAMINER, March 4, 1975, p. A-6)

MONITORING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: EVALUATION AND "THE BASICS"

Bryant Fillion, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, Ontario

Language development as I am using that term does not refer to a student's knowledge about language, grammar, or the literary heritage, but to his willingness and ability to use language--oral and written--for a great many purposes, including school purposes. I assume that we, like the general public, are concerned about the linguistic competence of our students: their reading, writing, speaking, and listening, including a particular concern for their ability to read, enjoy, and respond to literature.

I do not know whether today's students are writing and reading as well as, better, or worse than students did in the past. Despite the great public lament about lowered levels of literacy, there is little or no hard evidence that standards are lower, and even less evidence to support the charge that "progressive" teaching approaches have caused a decline. (See William H. Angoff, Executive Director of College Board Programs for E.T.S., "Why the SAT Scores are Going Down," ENGLISH JOURNAL, March 1975, 10-11. The comprehensive and well-documented "Bullock Report" in England reaches some of the same conclusions; see A LANGUAGE FOR LIFE, Report of the Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science: London: HMSO, 1975, pp. 10-35.) In short, there is no evidence which justifies a return to the "traditional" methods and practices of a supposed Golden Age. I suspect that at least part of the pressure to return to those "thrilling days of yesteryear (when out of the past come the thundering hoofbeats of the great horse Silver)" is one more example of our present nostalgia boom.

> 'Nostalgia,' says Rudi Franchi, 'is a yearning for a period that never existed. It's really a selected memory of a time we think was better. Perhaps we're too sophisticated now and we favor a more naive time--such as when nine out of 10 doctors preferred Camels. For example, everybody's so interested in the '30s with the Busby Berkley musicals and Hollywood glamor that they forget those bread lines and a whole world in turmoil. Or, take Norman Rockwell, the world that he portrayed in such detail never existed, but we'd like to believe it did.' (Barry Lazar, "The Nostalgia Boom: Investing in Fun--for Profit." QUEST, November 1975, p. 360.)

Whatever the causes of today's concern for "the basics", the present emphasis on literacy and language development is justified. Whether or not our memories of bygone students are accurate, the fact remains that a high level of literacy is increasingly important for more and more of our students. As the Bullock Report says, "the changing pattern of employment is making more widespread demands on reading and writing skills and therefore exposing deficiencies that may have escaped attention in the past . . . /the standards of literacy of school leavers/ are not satisfying present day requirements . . . . . It may be true that in commerce, industry, and higher education alike comparisons with past standards are misleading, but the clear implication is that standards need to be raised to fulfill the demands that are being made upon them." (A LANGUAGE FOR LIFE, London: HMSO, 1975, p. 4.)

Like most English teachers, I did not choose my career through any passionate concern with basic skills. I assumed and never questioned seriously that, as all of our official curriculum guides and public statements said, English contributed to students' command of the language and communication skills, but what I did mainly was teach literature and traditional grammar, and make composition assignments. Today, however, we ignore the basic skills at our peril. As Steve Dunning says,

> Lay people once said, 'I'd better watch what I say!' when meeting an English teacher. We had mysterious and powerful things going for us: we knew about

who and whom; where apostrophes belonged; and who killed Duncan in MACBETH. But some of the myths surrounding our business have disappeared, and crunch-weary parents can lash out, 'The hell with Duncan. My kid can't read and write!' (ENGLISH JOURNAL, Sept. 1975, 9.)

Whether we like it or not, the public expects that English teachers can and should accept a primary role in improving students' language. As our critics point out, somewhat ominously, it is public concern for communication and language, rather than for literature, which gives us our favored position in the school curriculum and our security as teachers of a "required", "basic" subject.

What has all of this to do with monitoring language development? I believe that in any curriculum shift toward a concern with linguistic competence one of our major problems will be with evaluation. So long as we viewed English as an academic subject, with content to be covered and information transmitted, our evaluation problems were relatively simple. It is not difficult to determine whether students remember what we've said and they've read. Furthermore, with the conventional academic model, we do not need to be overly concerned with the matter of development; there is an implied check in the material itself. The literature assigned in grade twelve is presumably more difficult than that assigned in grade ten, and students are presumably asked to be more sophisticated in their responses in the higher grades.

When we begin to look seriously at skills and competence, however, the problem is more complex, just as it is more difficult to determine the effectiveness of a piece of writing than to assess its mechanical correctness. I am reasonably sure that we can find out whether our students have read HAMLET, and even get a rough approximation of their understanding of the work--at least on a literal level. I am confident that we can find out whether they understand the concepts of subjects, predicates, adjectives, adverbs, plots, theme, and the like. I am less confident that we are finding out whether our students are improving in writing and in their responses to literature; whether they are making progress and--if so--what kind. Lacking such information, we are unable to confirm or deny the charges brought against us, or to assess the real effects of our English programs on students. Given present evaluation procedures, it is virtually impossible for a parent, university admissions officer, or employer to determine the level of literacy or achievement of an individual or group of students. More significantly, we as teachers are in the dark in a great many instances, forced by the pressure of time, large classes, and a demanding curriculum to get through a course of study in the uncertain hope that some of it is getting through to the students.

How, then, do we monitor a student's language development? How do we assess the nature and extent of his improvement in using language, writing, and literature? How do we determine what effect our course of study is having on him, if he does--in fact--make progress? Establishing a system of monitoring involves three related steps: first, determining what "progress" means; second, deciding on appropriate data to collect and criteria for their evaluation, and third, deciding what records to keep.

STEP ONE: WHAT DOES "PROGRESS" MEAN?

In very general terms, what are our objectives and priorities? Unfortunately, there are no set answers here and we necessarily get into questions of personal and professional values. How important is the acquisition of information about grammar, literacy terminologies, and the literary heritage? How important are students' immediate attitudes toward writing or literature? Is technical mastery of spelling more basic than the student's confidence that he can express himself in writing? Is the extension of his experience with literature through wide independent reading

more important than his understanding of a particular literary work or his ability to support critical judgments with explicit references to the text? Teachers differ among themselves about such matters. (For some teachers, improvement means knowing more facts: the student who reads, listens, and remembers the most has made the most progress. Mr. Jones says Johnny's writing has improved because there are fewer spelling errors and sentence fragments. Mrs. Smith disagrees with his judgment, noting that Johnny writes less now and dislikes it more.) For many teachers, preparing students for the university takes precedence over developing each student's potential and this leads to very important and practical differences in how they teach and evaluate. It is important that these priorities and biases be stated and considered.

Progress implies movement, direction, and goals. Before we can monitor progress with early and late measures for comparison, we need to know what the goals are, and we need some agreement on acceptable indicators of direction: Mr. Jones and Mrs. Smith may both agree that their goal is improved independent reading with understanding but still disagree about whether the successful completion of workbook exercises indicates progress toward the goal.

It is not my intention to tell you what your goals and priorities should be in your department, school, or district, though I would obviously put emphasis on linguistic competence rather than on particular content. But I believe it is essential for teachers within departments to attempt to reach agreement on their aims--not to the end of establishing inflexible performance expectations for each grade level and course, but to provide guidelines for emphasis and evaluation. When monitoring procedures are divorced from priorities, the curriculum is drawn off-base as well, because we will -- one way or another -- teach for the tests we give.

STEP TWO: WHAT ARE APPROPRIATE DATA AND CRITERIA?

What do we look at, and what do we look for? Again, we have the problem of determining indicators of progress. In writing, for example, we may look at what the student writes in a variety of modes: journal entries, accounts of personal incidents, biographical writing, chronicles, speculative "think pieces," reviews of films or books. We may look at his writing process. The difficulty here is that much of the process is not directly observable, but we might assess his ability to generate ideas by determining if he can think of things to say orally, if he has information and ideas available to him when he speaks. We can check his mastery of the act of writing by giving a free-writing fluency check such as Ken Macrorie suggests in TELLING WRITING. Does the student have the editing skills necessary to revise work when he sees the need for it? Does he know where to begin a writing assignment; can he tell us how he will go about writing a summary, or finding information for a research paper? We may look at the student's attitude toward writing: his willingness to write, what he says about writing, the extent to which he undertakes voluntary work involving writing. The criteria we apply when looking at students' writing will also reflect our priorities. Personally, while recognizing the importance of spelling, sentence structure, and other technical concerns, I consider such things as motivation, purpose, and having something to say as the real "basics."

In literature, perhaps more than in writing, our definition of "progress" will influence our data collection. We might begin here with a common sense question: how do we characterize the "good" reader of literature? Is our model the sophisticated critic or college professor of literature, or the well-read layman who reads often and with enjoyment and makes frequent reference to books in his conversation? Most of us really are not satisfied with the person who just reads--though we could testify to the worth of that activity, and we make great claims for what the reading

of literature does for an individual. We usually expect the "good" reader to respond to and use what he reads in some way--at least partly because that's the only way we can tell whether or not he reads, understands, and appreciates literature. For most teachers the notion of "progress" includes a concern for the student's willingness and ability to read. . .some check on the amount and quality of the reading he does voluntarily.

Most statements of objectives in literature programs include some or all of the following:

(1) Increased awareness of, familiarity with, and knowledge about literature. The problem with our usual way of measuring this is that we find out whether he remembers what we told him rather than what he knows. We may become so involved in asking our questions that we fail to hear the student's questions or to consider what his answers tell us.

(2) Increasing willingness and ability to

- (a) read a variety of literary genres. (What reading do our students do voluntarily?) This is something that can best be determined over a long period, through systematic but informal data gathering.
- (b) read increasingly challenging, more sophisticated books.
- (c) respond to works in a variety of ways. Alan Purves has done extensive studies of students' responses to literature and characterizes them as follows:

  Analytic-synthetic. The student comments on the structure of the selection, examining its parts as they relate to the whole.

  Interpretational. The student considers the "meaning" of the work.

  Classificatory. The student considers the genre of a selection and its similarities to and differences from other works.

  Contextual. The student views the work historically, noting its relationship to the times in which it was produced or to the life of the artist who produced it. They also study the critical history of the selection.

  Personalistic. The student relates the selection to his own life and feelings; what associations does the book arouse; what attitudes or pictures of reality does a film or commercial create; what judgments or feelings does a work call forth?

  Evaluative. The student judges the worth of a particular work or considers the criteria by which it is to be judged. (This particular formulation by Purves appears in the ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN, January 1972, 12-13. For a more extensive discussion of student responses, see Alan C. Purves and Richard Beach, LITERATURE AND THE READER: RESEARCH IN RESPONSE TO LITERATURE, READING INTERESTS AND THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE, Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1972.)
- (d) consider and evaluate his own responses.

Given such objectives as these, the data we collect should include at least some indication of students' attitudes (do they read voluntarily? do they ever talk about what they read? do they ever recommend books to others?), some record of what they read voluntarily, and some record of the kinds of responses they make to literature in an open-ended situation.

I believe most teachers would agree with the following statement in "The Bullock Report":

> . . . one of the most important tasks facing the teacher of older juniors and younger secondary pupils is to increase the amount and range of their voluntary reading. We believe that there is a strong association between this and reading attainment, and that private reading can make an important

contribution to children's linguistic and experiential development. (A LANGUAGE FOR LIFE, p. 126.)

The point, of course, is that if we value the student's voluntary reading, and if we recognize it as "a powerful instrument for the improvement of standards" (Bullock, p. 130), then we really ought to get some information about it, but we very seldom do this, even in an informal way.

As a junior high school teacher with manageable class loads of about 100 students, I worked out and evaluated a literature program based upon students' independent reading, and you may be interested in some of the techniques that were used to keep track of students' reading. Dwight Burton and I wrote an account of the program in "A Literature Program for the Middle School," THE CLEARING HOUSE, May 1971, pp. 524-527.

STEP THREE: WHAT RECORDS DO WE KEEP?

There are two very real problems here, of book-keeping and of the use of information by teachers. We are all aware of the potential dangers of the "self-fulfilling prophecies" about students, where records prejudice rather than help.

One of our major difficulties at present is that our system of record-keeping on students makes it extremely difficult to determine either the nature or the extent of students' progress through his years in school, and the kinds of evaluation we customarily do in the classroom make it difficult for a teacher to assess progress even in the course of a school year. For example, if a student consistently receives marks of 65 or C in English in grades 7 to 9 or 10 to 12, does this mean that he has not improved? What, in fact, does it tell us about him other than that his teachers tended to judge him as "average" in relation to his classmates in each of those years? Or, within a single year, if the student's first paper is marked C and his final paper is also marked C, does that mean that he has made no progress? Without entering into the controversy over marking, my point here is that marks are obviously inadequate indicators of progress. Even when a student's marks improve over time, we do not know what the change signifies: perhaps the quality of his work improved, or he started doing assignments he previously ignored, or he was more capable of doing the kind of work required at the end of the course than he was the work required earlier.

"The Bullock Report's" comment is probably applicable here, as well as in the U.K.: "The records which accompany a child from the first or infant school are all too often inadequate. Rarely are there indications of a child's specific strengths and weaknesses, recorded in such a way as to help the teacher at the next level to give special attention to them." (p. 215) I believe that a profile of the student's work would be useful, following the principle stated in Bullock that "the information they contain should be such as to give genuine guidance to the . . . department and to teachers . . ." "Subjective assessment is valuable, but it is the more revealing for being supported by objective data and actual evidence of performance. . . we have in mind a profile which would include diagnostic information and examples of written work. The essential thing about diagnostic data is that they should help the receiving teacher . . ." (p. 217).

The question to answer here, then, is: What information would be most useful to the teacher? And, again, our answer to this depends on our values and priorities. Personally, I would like to know the kinds of things the student has read and enjoyed. I would like to see some samples of his writing from previous years. I want to know how he feels about reading for enjoyment. I would like to know the kinds of questions he would ask about poems, short stories, or films if there were no teacher

around to ask the questions for him. I would like to know whether he finds it difficult to find things to say about academic types of issues and questions; whether he enjoys speculating about abstract questions. I would like to know how well he writes when doing assignments like reporting on experiences, anticipating and predicting future events, perceiving casual and dependent relationships, giving explanations of how and why things happen, dealing with problems in his imagination, creating experiences through his imagination, and justifying his own or others' behavior (Bullock, p. 67). In looking through present writing samples, I would pay particular attention to whether or not he specifies and relates. As James Moffett points out in TEACHING THE UNIVERSE OF DISCOURSE,

> . . . two general limitations characterize the thought and speech of younger children and of older but 'disadvantaged' people--the failure to specify and the failure to relate . . . Specifying is an act of analysis; relating an act of synthesis. The verbally immature or disadvantaged student needs, on the one hand, to discriminate and specify more, which would move him toward details; and, on the other, he needs to connect in, for example, temporal, causal, and contrastive ways, and to subordinate ideas to establish rank and salience, all of which would move him toward high abstraction. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968, p. 73.)

Like Ken Macrorie, I would examine the writing for indications of incipient Engfish the dull, lifeless prose which results from trying to sound intelligent rather than trying to say something.

I would like to know what this student finds challenging and what he finds too difficult. Where, in other words, can I best begin with him?

Whatever monitoring procedures we adopt, we must be concerned with their possible effects on the student's work, his attitude, and the curriculum. Monitoring, like evaluation, is not an end in itself, and it should not be permitted to interfere with our primary aims--helping students to learn and to improve. Too much evaluation, using intrusive measures and formal testing procedures, is like constantly pulling up a plant to see if it's growing. Similarly, we must be aware of the stress and anxiety which our procedures may create for students. Again, to cite Bullock,

> There is no doubt that many secondary school pupils develop unsympathetic attitudes to literature as a result of their experience in preparing for an examination. We saw lessons in which a novel was treated as a hoard of factual information, with the pupils scoring marks for the facts they remembered . . . We saw pupils encountering poems as little more that comprehension passages, on which the teacher's information and interpretations were recorded as marginal notes. (p. 131)
>
> . . . the analytical approach to poetry . . . has been successively reinforced by every new examination which has been introduced . . . T.S. Eliot once said of practical criticism: 'It cannot be recommended to young people without grave danger of deadening their sensibility . . . and confusing the genuine development of taste with the sham acquisition of it.' (p. 135)

I do not consider monitoring as a way of goading students or scaring them into working harder, which is one reason I prefer the term "monitoring" to "evaluating." Evaluation is too closely tied to the notion of marking, and of motivating by the use of threats. Monitoring is carried out to provide us with information which will--or should--lead to more efficient teaching. If it is done simply to provide another grade for the book, or as a means of motivation, our time and effort might better be spent elsewhere.

Monitoring language development, most simply stated, is finding out whether students are improving in writing, reading, speaking, and listening. There are

several reasons why this information is important, not least of which is our own need for reassurance that what we are doing is making a positive difference. In the face of increasing criticism from virtually all quarters, we are understandably a bit nervous and defensive, and we need--both for ourselves and our critics--more than our unsupported beliefs that our students really do improve and that the situation is not as desperately bleak as some people seem to think. More important, we need to know about our students' progress in order to help them learn. If we are ever going to individualize and personalize education, we are going to need more information than we currently have about individual students' work in our subject. Before we can "begin where the student is" we need to locate him and have some notion about where he came from and the direction in which he's headed.

- - - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"This is a time of year when editorialists are prone to preach the story of little Johnnies and Janes trekking to school for the first time, leaving tearful parents standing at the family doorstep. We're switching, however, to education facilities, and closing with a query. . . 'WHO is educated.'

If ever there is a fortunate community, educationally, it is Tempe. Here we possess nursery schools, kindergartens, grammar schools, three high schools and twelve colleges that comprise a university. To these public institutions must be added parochial schools and services of private tutors.

Only the stupid would remark that we here in Tempe lack facilities for an education. These facilities may be equalled elsewhere, but they certainly cannot be surpassed!

Ralph Waldo Emerson in 183? wrote: 'The things taught in schools and colleges are not an education, but the means to an education.'

Tempe and Arizona have done well in providing good schools in abundance, and proficient staffs of teachers and administrators to operate these schools. What puzzles many a parent is: 'With all these fine facilities doing their intended jobs, how can a person really determine if his child has become truly educated?'

To sort of help us, TDN calls on a professor in Chicago who is reported to have given a certain test to his pupils. The professor first told his pupils that they were not really educated unless they could say YES to all these questions:

--Has your education given you sympathy with all good causes and made you espouse them?
--Has it made you public-spirited?
--Has it made you a brother to the weak?
--Have you learned how to make friends and to keep them?
--Do you know what it is to be a friend yourself?
--Can you look an honest man or a pure woman straight in the eye?
--Do you see anything to love in a little child?
--Will a lonely dog follow you down the street?
--Can you be high-minded and happy in the meaner drudgeries of life?
--Do you think washing dishes and hoe-ing corn just as compatible with high thinking as piano playing or golf?
--Are you good for anything to yourself? Can you be happy alone?
--Can you look out on the world and see anything but dollars and cents?
--Can you look into a mud puddle by the wayside and see anything in the puddle but mud?
--Can you look into the sky at night and see beyond the stars?
--Can your soul claim relationship with the Creator?

We sincerely believe that if the children can answer, affirmatively, upon graduation, all these questions, they are truly educated. And hard-earned dollars spent for local 'brain factories' will be money well spent!" ("Brain Factories," an editorial in the TEMPE DAILY NEWS, Aug. 25, 1972, p. 2)

WRITING, PRISONS, AND THE ENGLISH TEACHER

Richard Koch, University of Iowa

a relatively young man
tall, thin, and awkward
rises at the front of the room

his brown plaid sportcoat
is oldfashioned
with shoulder pads,
it is almost humorously
too small,
it rides up over his fanny,
his arms stick out of it
like the legs
of a gawky waterbird

his hair is thinning
and a little gray

moving to the podium
in his dream
he begins, with large clumsy hands,
to shuffle the papers of his speech
searching in them for something
more than he has written

Those are lines from a poem called "Scenes from the State Prison." I can't seem to write the rest of the poem, but it is about an English teacher who conducts an experimental writing class in a state prison in Michigan. When the class is over the teacher knows that his life is quite different than it was, but he can't seem to talk about it to anyone. He vacillates back and forth between the language of formal discourse in his reports and the language of a lunatic standing on a table and screaming at his frightened audience. The formal reports about education, of course, don't draw much attention. In his screaming he says over and over to the onlookers, "Don't you see? Don't you see? Don't you see?" But, in the dream the audience never does see.

So, I filed the fragments of the poem and the thing on paper which was halfway between a report and an essay. And I tried to forget about them. But then last week in my freshman rhetoric class at the University of Iowa (reading, writing, and speaking) my students were looking at a couple of editorials on Angela Davis--from the time her trial was going on. I had put the editorials alongside an excerpt from her book IF THEY COME IN THE MORNING. The classroom purpose for our doing this was to look at the difference in realities created by different perspective and different language frameworks and perhaps to generate a few politically oriented topics some members of the class might choose to do research papers on. But, while I was on my way to doing this the class stopped me with a near brawl about the state of prisons today. Some of them were appalled at the conditions Davis described; some claimed she was coddled; some of them just despised her and that was all there was to it. One of their basic disagreements was about what prisons are like. Some of them, in the heat of battle, claimed to have visited a prison and verified that there were no roaches or rats whatsoever. Some of them claimed there were.

I was interested in this discussion for its own sake. The students were interested in it, and I wanted to help them pursue it. And it gave me the opportunity as a writing teacher to suggest to them that this situation--where we all cared about

prisons and what they are like but didn't know, or couldn't prove what we knew--was precisely what could make doing a research paper worthwhile. We needed someone to go find out about prisons and report back to us. Then, when the class was over, I went back to my office and got out my essay.

As I read it I realized that my life, since I taught that course, has partly been measured in degrees of recovery from the experience. At the time I used the drive home each week, from Jackson to East Lansing, to try to get over the shock of being with men who were living out one of my nightmares, of being let into a prison and not let back out. I was always grateful for the contact with university vehicle maintenance men who would begin to service the car and perhaps talk to me about the weather for a moment after I arrived. Through some concentration I would then begin to reorient myself so as not to expect each black person I met to have knowledge of the prison (the class began with about eighteen black and five white, roughly approximating the appearance of the prison population I came in contact with). Later I would wander through the house and perhaps glance at a weekly news magazine and think how ludicrous it seemed to read about normal life while some men were in prisons like Jackson.

I suppose I got out the essay because my students' discussion reminded me of why I wrote it in the first place. People ought to know. Prisons are society's place of last resort for some of its citizens, and consequently they are places of despair for their inmates. It is important for people to say what they are doing in these places and whether they think it is helping or not.

More directly related to the field of English, I think the results of that course can offer some ideas about how the profession might approach a large potential body of students among prison inmates; and I hope I can offer a helpful perspective in the continuing discussion about education and its connection with the personal growth of inmates and other students.

When I was invited by the Department of Corrections and the Department of Continuing Education to design and teach an experimental writing course at the prison, on a very modest federal grant for experimental education, I decided to use a variation of the experience-centered (or student-centered) writing course I had taught for the Michigan State English Department for three years. While I had not always achieved ideal successes in that course I felt the evidence was clear that such courses could lead to important self-discovery through language as well as increased skill in using language. For most students the opportunity to write about their own interests and values had led to the questioning and clarifying of these values, and through the responses of others to their writing it also had led to a better understanding of how their values related to their world. In this atmosphere of writing and discussing the desire to be clearly understood and to be convincing was usually a natural development. Most of the time this led to better communication. With prison inmates this approach met some special difficulties but also, I think, a chance for some of the most meaningful successes.

The initial and primary goal of the course was to get students to focus on those points where language could make a vital connection with their lives, to help them discover (or rediscover) that language--when it is not purely an academic concern--can be a main way for explaining things to yourself and to others. A second goal growing directly out of the first was to help them write better.

The class was open to any inmate who wanted to enroll, up to around twenty students. It was non-credit and entirely voluntary. Only twenty three people signed up so no screening was necessary, and happily they represented varied educational backgrounds including a few who were college students. I felt that with diverse interests

and different backgrounds they would have more to offer one another than they would if they worked mainly out of specifically academic interests. I also felt that the possibilities for the mutual exchange of technical advice about how to write better were still rich.

I was prepared for a cross section of prison inmates, but I was not quite prepared for the mainly normal and real people who appeared in class on that first day. A usual stereotypic view of prison inmates, suggested by people who have come into contact with them, is that every inmate holds the belief (often thought of as humorous) that he is normal and he cannot understand what he is doing in this place with criminals. Most inmates I met did have this feeling. But, I believe for many of them this was a normal and valid human reaction to their situation. Often the dishonesty of an inmate would not seem greater than that of many people who were not in prison. One man had been a small time embezzler. He had known he might be imprisoned, but he did not feel like an exceptionally dishonest person. Another man had a violent temper, and had no doubt acted many times under the power of it; but he also felt there must be some good purpose for him in life and he wanted very deeply to find it. Another man took heroin in order to perform better sexually to keep his wife (she left him anyway) and wound up involved in a violent act in a way that still confused him. And yet another man felt passionately that his government was carrying out terribly immoral and destructive acts. I believed this too. I do not mean to suggest that all inmates are in prison by a quirk of fate. However, I think it is fair to emphasize that the very great majority of inmates are not "big time" criminals, nor are their motives or their behavior wildly perverse or abnormal. Almost all of the inmates I knew behaved like normal, basically good people. During my introduction of the course on the first day one man raised his hand and asked, "Are you nervous?" I hesitated and then answered that I was. "You don't have to be," he said.

We began our writing with free associations (stream of consciousness thinking recorded). The first day I asked people to free associate to music of a record I had brought to class. Other free associations were on subjects like "prison" or "home." For the second week's class meeting I asked each person to do two writing projects. The first was a recording of sensory impressions experienced while sitting in one place for one-half hour. This is a very common writing project in classes today, and I used it for the usual reasons: to at least temporarily heighten their sensory awareness, to help the students increase their awareness of distinctions they were making between sensory and emotional or intellectual responses, and finally to help them become better able to change levels of abstraction from concrete details to generalizations and back again in their writing as it became useful to them. The second project was to write two paragraphs about themselves, one on how the writer saw himself and another on how he thought others saw him. We used these paragraphs mainly as a way of introducing people to one another, but they also provided a chance for an opening discussion on whether readers could understand what the writer meant and whether the writer felt satisfied with the way people responded to his description.

For the next several weeks I asked students to choose one or both of two basic directions, both of which were basically autobiographical: they could write about some event or series of events, or some relationship which was especially important to them and which they felt they could remember vividly; or they could write about a central goal or value in their life. The narrative writings included one in which a student (the same student who had told me not to be nervous) remembered in horrifying detail a childhood beating, the unfair reason for it, and the results of it in his family. Another described a series of prison visits one wife had made and the progressive breakdown of the marriage that occurred between and during those visits. Other papers dealt with important places in a person's past, moments of personal triumph or discovery, or events that had taken place in prison. The essays about hopes,

ERIC

goals, and values often drew on the same kinds of experiences of course, but the writers were usually more concerned with the societal and political implications of the events they chose to write about. One essay attacked the use of the word "ex-convict" on the grounds that it did not separate the person referred to from his past as the "ex" suggested, but rather it tied him to his conviction and his crime.

In the middle weeks of the course, Art Buchwald made a surprise visit to our class, and he encouraged the students to write about prison and prison life because he felt there was a public market for that subject in newspapers and magazines. No one was required to accept this or any of my invitations, and the form of the writing (story, drama, poetry, essay) was always chosen by the student. Most students tried at least a couple of the projects I suggested. Those who could neither accept the projects or find alternatives I encouraged to attempt some writing which included no public responsibilities whatsoever--keep a daily journal for example.

Usually an hour or somewhat more of a class meeting was spent reading and discussing papers members of the class had written. We would discuss problems that had come up, discoveries that had been made, or start by having several writers read their papers aloud, with the class freely responding to what was written about and to how it was written. We would attempt to appreciate as carefully as we could what the paper made us think or feel. Then we would ask the writer what he had wanted his paper to do to an audience, and if there was a discrepancy we would begin to help him explore ways to accomplish what he wanted. With a class like this in which the students are not familiar with the task of responding specifically to writing, the instructor often has to begin by trying to make connections between a kind of reader response and what he thinks may be a technical quality of the paper. I would sometimes ask if readers felt so much a part of the experience of a paper because of the way it shared sensory details of that experience. Or, I would suggest that the ideas in another paper did not seem to relate to each other to me and ask if this was partly why we as a class were not moved to agree with the conclusion.

I was pleased with the generally high level of energy in the class response to the experience-centered classroom situation. However, from the start there were also signs that the class had some problems related to this approach. By about the halfway point (after four weeks) the class had lost just slightly less than fifty per cent of its membership. Two of the college students wanted a more academically oriented class (one that would devote its whole energy to learning to write term papers). But others were badly intimidated by the practice of reading papers aloud; this occurred even though I carefully did not pressure anyone to read his papers if he didn't want to. Others simply discovered they weren't interested. For one thing it was spring and a man had to be very committed or a fool to stay in the classroom if he could get time out in the air. I was told the attrition rate in my class was about equal to spring attrition in the other classes in the prison academic school which were given for credit.

I later learned that my invitations to write autobiographical stories and prison writings were somewhat suspicious looking projects. The students were very hesitant to participate in anything that looked like a psychological probe (which the idea of autobiography suggested to some) or to write frankly about prison, although they would talk fairly openly about it. It was their belief that it was dangerous for an inmate to write negatively about prison--dangerous in the sense that it would get the writer labeled as a troublemaker making him subject to punishment and causing difficulty in gaining parole. The disorientation that can occur in a person who has not had previous experience-centered classes may have caused a few to drop out. The pervasive intimidation of being in a writing class also very likely affected the number of people who could operate in the class.

ERIC

Despite all of these factors, however, those who remained in the class continued on to important and often exciting conclusions. The most exciting result was that they could write more effectively about matters of importance to them, and they understood to some extent the ways in which this opened up new thought to them about their lives and their relationships with others. One of these happy experiences was the progress made by the political activist. He could use language pretty well from the start, and he was always overflowing with ideas that he wanted to write about. But, in the beginning he could not focus clearly on one thing at a time or show how one thing related to another. His subjects were important; he was full of lists of concerns and events; but he had great difficulty in developing them fully or in linking them in their significance. By sharing his work in class, getting criticism, and reworking several papers, he gradually became able to focus on one important idea at a time and to work out the implications and arguments related to it. The essay on being called an "ex-convict" was one result. He also discovered how to tell a fuller story with the details and subtleties that help bring the events to life. And because ideas and communicating them had been so important to him all along he fully understood how much these discoveries meant in terms of his ability not only to relate to others but to shape his world.

For several other students the early writings were the most important because it was in working with those projects that they found they were able to use writing as a way to work through their ideas and to make contact with others. This discovery was far more essential to them than what they learned later about how to write better. Once they discovered by writing about themselves that the pen on paper was just an extension of their own thinking, a way to know their own mind better, it would not have occurred to them to stop this process whether there was a class or not. In one person this discovery unlocked a flow of thoughts that sometimes resulted in ten or twenty pages of writing from one week to the next. One of these was the paper narrating the breakdown of his marriage. Only toward the very end of the course, after many events and ideas had become more clear to him, did he begin to go back and shape his writings for a fuller expression of what he meant and a greater affect on his readers. Then we tried to help him and others in the class who were interested to work toward the publication of their work. If the number of inmates who can accept the responsibilities involved in an experience-centered writing class is limited at first, still for those who can the rewards may include getting a better understanding of themselves and a greater likelihood of shaping a positive future. And there is probably no group of people more in need of these things.

I believe there are two broad conclusions suggested by this experience. The first is related to prison, and the second has to do with the schools. But both are deeply disturbing. It is generally agreed that inmates are, for the most part, very much like other people. And, although there are exceptions, there is probably not much dispute about what prisons (especially maximum security prisons) are like. Instead of being devoted to helping the inmates cope with their difficulties and grow beyond their problems with society, prisons exist primarily for control, that is, to protect society from the inmate and to punish the inmate. In arguing that this is wrong, I am assuming two points of psychology which seem so broad and so elementary as not to need argument. Nevertheless, this is the place to make them explicit. The first assumption is that a person who can achieve personal fulfillment and societal acceptance through "normal" channels is unlikely to become a societal misfit. And so if our regular institutions (the schools, for example) accomplished this goal for more individuals there would be fewer criminals. The converse assumption is that if we work with societal misfits (prison inmates, for example) in such a way as to help them develop both a fuller sense of their self-worth and the skills necessary to succeed in society we are making it more likely that they will be able to avoid future crimes.

We maintain limited practical programs like prison school with which we delude ourselves. And always there are some remarkable resilient individuals who can get what they need from prison schools to survive in society. But for the great majority the school work and the limited counseling are nothing in the face of their past and in the face of prison life. It is nearly impossible to understand from the outside the utterly dehumanizing effect a prison has on its inmates. It is at first encouraging to discover that not all people who work in prisons are ogres or sadists, although some are. I grew to know the teachers and school administrators as mainly sincere and helpful people. But there is simply little that compassionate educators and guards can do to offset the absolute powerlessness an inmate experiences, at the mercy of all those around him (officials and other inmates alike) for the most basic daily functions and barest sense of privacy and decency. Seeing your wife and children is a rare and conditional privilege. Officials and inmates seem to agree that most of the time it is impossible to control beatings and homosexual rape except through the also destructive act of isolating the victim. And such acts are not rare; an inmate considers it the most apparent fact of life that he must constantly "watch himself."

As a society we seem to vaguely hope that prison really will "help" people, even though it is a hard lot. But, the percentage of inmates who return to prison after being released shows that this is not true (figures for Michigan alone in the year I taught my course, 1972, showed that a forty-six per cent failure rate existed for first-time parolees). Other times we like to think that prisons contain mainly past leaders of the Mafia and other criminal syndicates. But this also is not true. Jackson State Prison in Michigan is considered one of the largest walled prisons in the country, and I was told that there was not a single major crime figure confined there.

Instead of helping inmates cope with life we are isolating and punishing them, crushing their sense of self-worth and destroying their contacts with family and society. Consequently, our prisons produce severely handicapped, deeply embittered ex-convicts who, if they have learned anything at all in prison, have learned to be thickskinned and to be more skilled criminals. As long as prisons are designed and financed as they are today there is absolutely no hope for large scale rehabilitation of prison inmates. Prisons like the ones I have been describing could only really exist for one of two reasons: either we are unwilling to spend the money it would take to support programs of genuine concern that would have real opportunity for human growth and rehabilitation; or, we are mainly interested in punishing people. Both are very likely part of the truth. The first possibility reveals a frightening sense of our national priorities--these people in prison are simply not worth much to us. The second shows a tendency toward vindictiveness that is both unloving and psychologically unwise.

And just as prisons are utterly failing their inmates now, other institutions have failed them in the past (otherwise they would not be in prison). As I have already suggested, one of the primary institutions which must have failed them is the schools. The cry may be raised: "We cannot solve everyone's problems. We are here only to educate." And, to some extent this must be allowed. The schools alone cannot rid our society of urban ghettos. The schools alone cannot change society, prevent corruption, and save our children. But, finally, education means helping people develop the knowledge and imagination to survive in the modern world. To the extent that we do not do this for everyone we have failed. In our country today, the prisons stand as a major failure in which the schools must share. And how many more have we failed from among those who are not in prison? Neil Postman in "The Politics of Reading" reminds us that suicide is the second most common cause of death among adolescents, and that more people are hospitalized for mental illness in this country than for all other illnesses combined. (Neil Postman, "The Politics of Reading," ILLITERACY IN AMERICA: POSITION PAPERS in HARVARD EDUCATION REVIEW, May 1970) These facts indicate the breadth of our failure.

Of course, the best question is not how much of the blame must the schools accept, but what forces within education are causing the schools to fail with so many? And, what can be done about it? I believe that a classroom in which "rewards" are presented to students as their main reason for learning (whether the reward is poker chips and stars for first-graders or grades for college students) and in which it is the teacher alone who knows that the subject is worth learning, is a classroom which is encouraging an unhealthy dependence on formulas (if I do this, I get a poker chip). And I believe that this is a classroom which discourages true self-understanding and the development of the imagination. The imagination would ask: Why do this? How does it relate to me? What does it say about my life? Because this argument treads on such battlescarred academic territory, let me add that this is not an argument against rewards (if children seem to like stars and benefit from them, then it is probably helpful of us to give them stars; and so long as colleges must evalute, some grades are probably necessary). But, I am arguing against replacing reasons with rewards and against replacing use of the imagination with acceptance of pat formulas.

I suspect the classroom orientation toward rewards unrelated to the subject being studied and the tendency to rely solely on the teacher's knowledge that the subject is worthwhile, grows mainly from the feeling among some educators that children will not learn unless their attention is centered on these rewards. But, as John Holt points out, this assumption is emphatically not true for small children who learn to talk (vocabulary, how to make sentences, and how to imbed one idea inside of another) before they reach school age, and with the main reward being that they become able to communicate. (John Holt, "Talk," HOW CHILDREN LEARN, NY: Pitman, 1967) The writing course I taught points out that the assumption is not necessarily true for adults. Even many prison inmates, among the most neglected members of our society, are able to become interested in learning when they discover it can lead to self-understanding and to satisfying contact with others. For children and adults working with language provides one of the most exciting opportunities for emphasizing a person's natural desire to learn. Most people can see how writing can be of importance to them, and so they can see it is worth learning about. It is a natural step for children to desire to become more sophisticated in their use of language as long as it is studied as a means of communication and not purely as a set of rules. And it is a natural step for children to notice that the writing of others provides opportunities for further communication. As long as we approach literature from this perspective (as if it were trying to communicate something) it is natural for people to want to become more sophisticated in their understanding of it. If history helped a child pursue his natural interest in how people relate to one another and how societies and cultures operate, it would relate to life. If science pursued a child's interest in how his natural world functions, it would relate to life. If mathematics helped a child solve problems of numbers and groupings in his real world, it too would relate to life. But this is not the place, nor am I the person, to outline courses of study in several fields.

However, I believe the writing course I taught shows again that experience-centered education need not be irresponsible or vague. In an experience-centered course the teacher's role is still important. Such a course can and ought to be organized (though there must be room for some flexibility). In the courses you need not give up the idea that some writing communicates better than others, rather you work with this idea to improve people's writing. And, finally, I hope the course shows that experience-centered education does lead directly to skills development. Only instead of development of skills which are devoid of worth in the mind of the student (and so quickly forgotten), it leads to improving skills precisely because they are seen to be of worth.

I am trying to argue two different points at once here, but I think they are importantly related. I am arguing that a new approach to education is badly needed

in our prisons, and not just in model "experimental" minimum security prisons, but in our real prisons, our neglected prisons. And, I am arguing that experience-centered education in the field of English could provide a leadership, and to some extent a faculty, that could take education of inmates in this direction. Further, I am trying to point out that experience-centered education needs to be a guiding force in English today if we are to have any hope of meeting our world's needs as well as teaching specific skills. I think experience-centered education is reasonable and viable, even in this time of de-emphasis on education and movement in state and federal governments toward mechanistic behavioral standards for the schools. We cannot expect governmental support for vaguely humane goals, but this need not--and must not--prevent us from persisting with an experience-centered approach to our students. This is the ground from which personal growth and skills development can be related to one another. And these are both goals we must strive for if we are to accept our share of responsibility for the survival of individuals, and for world survival as well. Perhaps actually getting this approach into the prisons in a meaningful way seems a nearly impossible task. But, I believe that sincerely working toward it is the only path toward health for me, for prison inmates, and for us as a society.

My students showed, in their response to the two editorials and the Angela Davis excerpt, that they have the capacity to be alert and concerned about ethics, social justice, and the importance of communication. I know this willingness and this alertness can be the key to their surviving and perhaps making a better world. And I know that what they need from me is not so much any information I have about prisons, but rather a skilled nurturing of their concern and of the imagination it takes to translate concern into meaningful action. I need to help them grow as individuals as they learn language skills. And I need to be careful not to distract them from the real world in order to teach but instead to equip them for it. This will not make the schools the saviors of our society, but it will mean that we are striving in the right direction.

- - - - - - - -

I wish to thank William Laubach and Al Krische, administrators at the prison academic school, for their complete cooperation while I was teaching this course. And I owe special gratitude to Charles McKee, Director of the Evening College at Michigan State University, who was one of the primary forces in bringing the course into existence and without whose personal and intellectual help the course would have been much less than it was.

- - - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

". . .Educators, legislators and officials have discovered that added money alone is not sufficient, that one-shot isolated devices like team teaching or flexible scheduling are ineffective, and that reforms cannot be put in standard packages and imposed from above.

In our own work, the two of us have uncovered some specific guidelines that promise greater success:

--The present public demand for greater emphasis on basic skills must ultimately face the fact that earlier reform movements have encountered.

--There is no one best approach to schooling. Different students have different needs, and the road to basic skills (or to any other goal) may run in indirect ways, for example through drama, geography or physical education. The real key is that there is no one best reform; instead a variety of approaches is needed to meet the variety of public preferences and pupil needs that arise for each of the five major functions of schooling." (John Pincus and Michael Kirst, "School Reform: The Hunt for Consensus," LOS ANGELES TIMES, August 17, 1975, p. IV-1)

ENGLISH EDUCATION: FORGING A NEW HUMANISM

George H. Henry, University of Delaware

I

From its very beginning in the Renaissance, humanism as a study of the art of language got underway with the realization that it held within it a new view of education, one rich in respect to this world in comparison with the scholastic orientation toward salvation. The many treatises on education during the Renaissance demonstrated how the "new" ancient resources contained in language could initiate youth into an exciting way of being human. But just as Christian perfection was not easy, so being "essentially" human in this secular sense demanded rigorous cultivation, too. From the neo-platonic Florentine Academy to the extreme rationalism of the Enlightenment, a good three hundred years, humanism thought of itself primarily as a way of teaching the cultivation of this "essence," and in time Christianity reconciled revelation with this worldly "essence," especially in Jesuit education and later on in the small Protestant liberal arts colleges in America.

By the fifteenth century, the humanist teacher perceived that the extant classics were often mutilated, deleted, corrupt, varying in syntax; that words had to be defined in light of the temper of an age; that other unknown works were probably precursors; that the interpretation of these classics had changed through time. Thus a large-scale literary industry other than teaching gradually grew into the system of humanist education.

So wide-ranging did non-teaching humanism become that by the early nineteenth century, literary humanism could distinguish five discernible modes of activity, each one large enough to be a specialized activity, one segment of which could occupy a scholar's lifetime. (1) It was engaged in philology (now called linguistics), involving such acts as encoding and decoding language, describing language processes, noting linguistic change, marking off dialect boundaries, relating sound and meaning and testing grammars. This aspect of humanism requires a mode of inductive thinking much like that employed in the natural sciences. (2) There was textual analysis, including such acts as exegesis and editing--authenticating, modernizing and correcting varying versions of literary works; for the doing of which there is possible a limited kind of "scientific" inquiry, but mostly an empirical inductive mode leading less to causation than to rational validation. (3) Literary history included in the main such acts as tracing influences, delineating movements, determining sources, recreating age. For these it has a kind of thinking common to other kinds of historians, a mode often called historical criticism, that can include the validation of a thesis, as in Parrington or Hicks or Leo Marx. (4) Literary criticism, which is the act of evaluation and the creation of a theory of the art of literature, can be empirical too, as, for instance, Aristotle's POETICS, which is the earliest model for building a theory extracted from instances of literature; or, more lately, Cleanth Brookes' THE WELL WROUGHT URN, the establishment of a theory of criticism based on eight "cases." There is within literary humanism, however, the idealistic implication that literary forms carry universal values, eternal truths, and general notions of something called the "human condition," none of which need be philosophically examined as part of literary art. (5) Last, there is teaching, the formal attempt "to humanize" the young through the study of language. Until recent times, humanism relied solely on rationalism to create both curriculum and instruction, hardly ever examining teaching empirically as it would works of literary art.

Let us observe these first four activities of contemporary humanism as a group before going on to the fifth, the pedagogical activity, which is the prime reason for this analysis. One notices that they all scrupulously stay within literature. "The ideal is nothing less than an understanding of all literature and the consequent

ERIC

ability to see any literary work in the living context of all literature," writes James Thorpe (1963), and he adds, "the increased understanding of literature is always the dynamic motive of literary scholarship." Nothing need be said, then, about "life," as if, automatically, an understanding of literature brings an understanding of life. This view is not clear about where scholarship itself stands in a given culture or in pedagogy. For, at a third level of abstraction there is scholarship, whose findings are once removed from literary expression, itself a second level of abstraction, an interpretation, a "criticism of life," and then, of course, there is the first level called "life." (It should be clear that while literature may be "a criticism of life," it does not follow that literary history and literary criticism are criticisms of life.) For instance, when Mr. Spiller writes, "if, therefore, the primary task of the literary historian is to record and explain the life histories of literary works. . ." he is reenforcing this thrice-removed abstraction: that literature has a life of its own, the result of which, for a century, has left us with a literary history without "history" and a history without literature. And along the same line, Mr. Frye writes, "the form of literature as a whole becomes the content of criticism as a whole," a belief surely unmanageable empirically and indeed a Platonic ideal way above the practice of "life"--that is, the Dachaus, My Lais, Watergates, and energy crises of this world. In short, all these four literary activities imply in effect that scholarship, which can, of course, feed only on what literature provides, lives a life of its own, scholarship being one thing and one's humanity another. Surely, to believe that works of literature "are created out of literature itself so far as the poet knows it," and that "literature bears testimony to its own literary origin" may give a sense of unity and order to the scholar but certainly not to his own life, or the poet's life, or the rationale of an age--or the average reader's life, especially one who happens to be a student in high school.

If we survey these four scholarly activities of humanism once more, but in a different way, one finds, in respect to the mode of inquiry within them, a "tapering off" from hypothetical empirical thinking in linguistics, to an inductive empirical quest in textual criticism, and an empirical rationalism in evaluation and literary theory, with Platonic idealism resorted to in appeals to the organic unity of all literature, wherein the study of literary structure (form and genre) itself seemingly instructs more than do ideas or deeds, much like Plato's claims for geometry in educating rulers of the state. Experimentalism as a mode of thinking, it should be noted, then, is more or less absent from all five of the literary activities save, perhaps, the study of language.

A third-run-over of these four non-teaching activities reveals that while all scholars would admit that these specialties are organically related and are separated only for more concentrated, thus more fruitful, study, few scholars see these specialties as means to an end: that if there be an inherent all-embracing unity in literary humanism, it resides in the larger end that we may all understand the language of literature better because of these activities, which is to say, be more susceptible to literary experience in many more ways and in many more places. If this be true, then, bluntly put, teaching is the supreme end of humanism.

Thus by far the largest activity of humanism is still pedagogy: first, to teach others how to carry on these four literary activities, and, above all, the pervasive activity of humanizing the people of a democracy. Now this pedagogical activity must include what scholarship need not do, and often does not do: emphasize (1) the direct experience of literature, (2) the ideas in literature, (3) the didactic element--to help the student weigh himself on a larger backdrop (not necessarily a literary backdrop) than his own time and culture; (4) the meeting with human beings face to face, for criticism deals directly with literary works of art. In the latter one can hold a theory, and, if wrong, one does little harm except misjudge the work or do injustice

to the author; but a wrong theory of teaching may not only harm many youths but well-nigh destroy the very humanity the teaching was hoping to cultivate. In short, in pedagogy the self cannot be left out, even when the teacher endeavors to ignore it, or be detached. In a democracy tens of millions of youth are called upon to "study" literary works, though only to the end that they become more human, though only a small fraction will be literary scholars, or scholars at all, though some become scholars in non-humanist fields of knowledge. Pedagogy must ask, How much and what kind of literature humanizes? And in what way does the manner of teaching matter? Who is to extrapolate from these scholarly activities a curriculum and a method? And in mass education how are those to be humanized who may read only fairly well and may be intelligent but not intellectual? Most scholars rarely raise such questions and when they do they employ an off-the-top-of-the-head rationalism, seldom giving these issues the time and attention they devote to their specialties. English Education must accept these questions, skeptical of a rationalism that is ever partial, incomplete, and conditioned by time and place. English Education cannot forge a viable theory of education based on such *á priori* reasoning.

Such questions make the nexus between the pedagogical aim of humanization and the activity of literary criticism more clear. Is humanization identical with literary criticism--that is, explicating a literary work, and thus the high school curriculum be a watered version of it or an elementary course in criticism such as the high school Advance Placement Program practically became--for instance, digging out the embedded allusions in "The Wasteland?" When Mr. Frye (the quotations from James Thorpe, Robert Spiller, and Northrop Frye are all from THE AIMS AND METHODS OF SCHOLARSHIP IN MODERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES, James Thorpe, ed., The Modern Language Association of America, 1963) rightly brings out that Eliot might be good with Donne but poor with Milton and Shelley, and Edmund Wilson good with contemporaries but poor with writers of over a hundred years ago, such as Swift and Jonson, how are we to judge what a mere youth is to do when he is subjected to all these and more in rapid succession? Humanism has seldom been concerned with such questions. English Education, after its fashion, was compelled to wrestle with them, and because the mere "taking thought" of them at conferences, seminars, and conventions did not yield enough to meet the pedagogical issue, English Education sought aid outside the rationalism of humanism--in the experimental "sciences."

II

Let us look, then, at this experimental mode of thinking that lies outside most of the five activities of literary humanism, yet occupies so strong a place outside humanism as to be affecting humanist pedagogy indirectly by way of English Education, the area of instruction where humanism comes closest to "life"; where humanism must deal not exclusively with literary works as such, but with human beings assembled in classes to be confronted by what humanism thinks the human role is other than scholarship. So strong, too, is this experimentalism that rationalism is losing its authority in more and more areas of human concern, even causing literary criticism to despair of its own pluralism within the shrinking of its boundaries--and, above all, its gradual loss of control in education.

By the seventeenth century explorations into the unknown (the creation of knowledge) by a method other than humanist idealism and empirical rationalism--that of an experimental inductive-deductive process, mathematically oriented--led to the spectacular results of Newton, Galileo, Harvey, and others. Literary humanism was not hostile to these new ideas of nature and man, often by necessity having to incorporate them into its own corpus of criticism simply because these new views of man and nature were seeping into poems, novels, plays, and essays. Yet it was suspicious of the method, not so much because it seemed inappropriate to evaluation and criticism of literature, especially when gravitation and the position of the earth seemed outside the human conditions as literary activity conceived it; but because the method earned

its "truth" by severe reductionism and the ultimate translation of man into measurable quantitiative patterns. It could rightly claim that pedagogy is so replete with unstable variables that any attempt to control them would inevitably lead to the subversion of the idealistic concept "humanity." A child, it may claim, is more than his I.Q., his measured behavior, his susceptibility to formal stimulus or reinforcement; but the experimentalist could in rebuttal reply that a child is more than his clarity of syntax, his reading of metaphor, his "love" of literature, and it could point out, too, the flagrant disregard of a child's humanity while humanists humanize him.

Nevertheless, the experimental method continued to develop inordinately and permeated more and more of Western culture by creating more fields of knowledge, many invading the study of man himself in sociology, in economics, in psychology, in anthropology--and, in the area of our chief concern in this essay--pedagogy.

All the while, humanism continually neglected to examine its pedagogy even on its own logical terms--its method of pure reason, Aristotelian induction, and the rigorous rationalism of literary criticism. It failed to listen to the warnings of experimental psychology that there are seriously limiting conditions affecting the life of the mind to be humanized, but humanism seldom turned its rigorous critical process on its pedagogy as it did on interpreting literature and as it did even on very minor literature. Better to critique a fourth-rate poet, recover a long-lost letter of Boswell's or set the date for Chaucer's third work than inquire into how best to teach poetry to children. To English Education, the idealistic defense by humanism of its being essentially concerned with universal and abiding values seemed a way of hiding its inability to cope with democratic education. In respect to the improvement of education, rationalism as a method of inquiry has come to a dead end.

Three Western-world-shattering ideas further eroded away the rationalism that humanism took for granted from ancient days. Marxism (1848), Darwinism (1859), and Freudianism (1930). These views not only greatly enlarged and revised the substance of literary humanism but, above all, severely challenged the reliability of reason. Marxism showed how reason was all too often determined by one's economic stance in society, how humanism itself has very often been used as a weapon in support of class consciousness, racism, and prejudice in the name of liberating the mind. Evolution revealed the biologic influence on thinking, leading to pragmatism, the belief that "just taking thought" was not enough motivation for the deepest kind of thinking; that one could not will to think unless there be some disturbing lack of adjustment in the "organism," not just in the "mind." Freudianism pointed to the non-rational dimensions of reasoning--repression, sublimation, and obsession, all of which could distort the context of statements themselves syntactically coherent and unified.

These inroads into the method of rationalism impaired the reliance on a humanistic pedagogy created entirely by reason, a way of thinking about teaching inherited and unexamined for over a thousand years. The general result was that because humanism could not avoid an encounter with depth psychology, empirical sociology, and cultural determinism in dealing with a literature replete with these, it had also to accept realitivity in literary criticism; that literary criticism has been susceptible to fashion, that insight, taste, and power of expression are the chief assets in the judgment of literature rather than the constant honing of literary theory, assets attained by reading outside the study of literary theory; that the validity of any literary inquiry cannot rest on its claimed disinterestedness and detachment; that in pedagogy rationalism has no way significantly to improve curriculum, method of teaching, the understanding of learning, the knowledge of the development of the children it would humanize.

III

Around 1875, (in 1874 the free secondary school was declared constitutional) when English as a subject of study gingerly got under way as a separate course in the American high school, it was a long time before the academic curriculum, the stronghold of conventional humanism, respected it as sufficient preparation for winning control of language; for it was first relegated either to the general curriculum or the vocational. Who needed English who could read Caesar, Horace, and Virgil in Latin, and also imitate the rhetoric of Cicero in Latin composition? On this point, the logician John Stuart Mill declared at his inaugural address at St. Andrews that the study of Latin sharpened the mind better than simple-inflected English syntax. As late as 1890, the Conference on English of the Committee of Ten of NEA looked with envy at the preferred status of Latin.

About this time, when English became more acceptable to humanism and grew in large numbers in our high schools, it sought respectability by faithfully imitating the way Latin had been taught, at a time when the teaching of Latin in college was most sterile. Gilbert Highet in THE CLASSICAL TRADITION has so profusely documented this condition that one of his illustrations may stand for dozens; this from his chapter "A Century of Scholarship": "Many of these /classical scholars/ give readers the impression that their authors hate their own language. . .for they write in a language neither modern, nor beautiful, nor even real." He quotes Sir William Osler's description (1866). ". . .spoonfed classes. . .with syntax and prosody. . .My experience was that of thousands. . .to climb Parnassus' in a fog! Their complaint was always the same. . .classical literature taught with an over-emphasis on precision. . .This belief. . .has spoilt many a teacher and many, many good pupils."

Something had to be done about secondary English, and the Committee of Ten (1891) was charged to settle many practical problems in secondary education that neither humanism or a democracy had ever faced before, in Europe or in America. Where should English start, how many years should it be studied, how is it to be organized when the pupils themselves are ever maturing and developing despite school? There was no English Education then split off from English, and English, itself a new subject, had to rely on its usual Aristotelian logic, on á priori reasoning, or on the traditional teaching of the classics. By this time, the sense impressionism of British empiricism, the association psychology developed by Herbart, and Rousseauism were seeping into the public schools, and undoubtedly were in the air at the Conference, for the final Report included a few statements that seemed to emanate from this growing empirical world outside humanism. Such statements as these: "Secondary schools. . .taken as a whole do not exist for the purpose of preparing boys and girls for colleges." They deplored "estimating a student's power to write a language. . . not for the sake of expounding something, but merely for the sake of showing his ability to write," and they criticized the prolonged formal study of spelling, of grammar, and of vocabulary--this from internationally known English scholars like Gummere and Kittridge. They lamented, "As to the colleges. . .they ought to take more interest than they have heretofore done, not only in secondary, but in elementary schools . . ." Actually, if English had taken an "interest," what had English department humanism to offer elementary education or the non-college-bound enrolled in high school English, especially when the Conference on English maintained that "every subject should be taught in the same way and to the same extent to all"? And, when, too, College Education department English had only the mode of rationalism to add to the knowledge of pedagogy. This Conference on English was the first exercise of leadership in American public schools by those in English. English would never again take the lead on its own, ever thereafter fighting a rearguard action against creeping experimentalism in English Education.

Meanwhile, universal education could not proceed on the premises of the 1890 Report and the classic tradition unless it be prepared to fail well over half the

sons of the common man extolled by the verses on the Statue of Liberty. The showdown came in a second conference (1918), the Report of the Reorganization of Secondary Education.

At this conference, J. F. Hosic, spokesman for the incipient English Education, declared in open meeting that "the best preparation for anything is real effort to experience in the present /that it is a mistake/ to regard English as a formal subject. . .The relating of items of knowledge to the pupils' daily experience is more important than relating these items to each other;" such as, for instance, having these youth find the neo-classic elements in Jane Austin, the beauties of Comus, or a snippet from the "Essay on Man." Thus was born a kind of Copernican revolution in the newly rising English Education; subject matter in English was not its own end but a means to the inculcation of ideals and attitudes. Just as Marx had stood Hegel on his head, so Spencer, the Darwinian, via Hosic, stood English on its head. English Education for the first time was appealing to experience and an epistemology different from idealism and rationalism.

College English departments were generally outraged by this heresy, maintaining that the study of literature was "its own end, and that good literature was good in itself. It was relevant to nothing but more literature. . . ," a defense based on the logic of philosophical idealism. By this time British empiricism severely challenged the epistemology of Platonic idealism and Aristotelian rationalism. Ideas have a source other than in pure thought, in the sensations and impressions through which we have first contact with "reality." Ideas rich in sensation are more accurate and precise, more vivid and clear, than the same ideas constituted by reason alone; thus the clarity of a statement is not entirely due to its proper syntactical arrangement or the local sequence of its ideas. Rhetorically relating a pale concept to an ambiguous referent of another concept does not enhance understanding or its retention but relating experienced concepts within specific situations does build more understandable meaning. In pedagogy, this view gave rise to field trips, sense-impressionism, projects, objects, play, the lush environment, activities, audio-visual materials, what was often termed relia. In English Education this radical empiricism appeared in two publications of the Council, THE EXPERIENCE CURRICULUM (1936) and THE CORRELATED CURRICULUM (1937), which increased the tension between English Education and the MLA, the bulwark of rationalism in humanism.

In 1941 occurred one of the most ironic contrasts in education between the logic of idealism and the logic of radical empiricism. English department humanists in New York State colleges were unceasing in their attacks on the preparation of high school students in composition. By deduction, this meant that there was little or no drill in grammar in the schools. Dora Smith, in English Education at the University of Minnesota (a leader in English Education), was brought in by the New York Regents to investigate the situation. Using the method of empiricism, her team made actual visits to 172 classrooms to critically observe the instruction, and they found that "More junior high school English classes were engaged in conjugating English verbs in six tenses than were engaged in all oral activities combined," and "more than twice as many lessons were devoted to drills and to technical grammar as were given over to the actual expression of ideas. . ." and, finally, she pointed to the frequency with which "more grammar is prescribed for the weak. . ." The irony is cited to reveal how this empirical inquiry of English Education differs from charged deduced by the non-experiential reasoning of traditional humanism.

In the late 1940's a further indulgence in almost sheer experience as method was paramount in a movement that was termed by its originators Life Adjustment Education, in which English was to be tied "to developmental tasks of youth" and to human relations and "life-like" activities. Just as humanism with its list of classics and its survey of British literature, most of it read in snippits, had been attempting

to get along without experience, so now the method of empiricism was directed virtually to total experience without much rational conceptualization. At no other time, probably, were idealistic humanism and radical empiricism so literally antithetical. Some sort of synthesis had to be made, for the tension was mounting to the point where the public was taking sides, and finally in 1958 a Conference on Basic Issues in English was planned, composed of both camps whose chief end was at least to clarify the widening breech between rationalism and empiricism in the public schools.

The analysis of the high school curriculum by the Basic Issues Conference (1959), a joint undertaking by English and English Education, brought forth thirty-five basic issues all listed as if of equal standing, a sure sign of pure a priori rationalism that, as presented, could not possibly clarify where the "basic" lay, because there was no evidence among these numerous points of how the discipline was actually being taught (nothing like Dora Smith's survey) except the sporadic yearly castigation of the performance of in-coming freshman by college teachers. These enumerated issues were created without reference to the nature of youth, the kind of democratic society that brought forth the differences between English and English Education; or to rival theories of man's nature. This kind of Cartesian reasoning indulged in by the Conference may be appropriate to the criticism of literary art but not to a live social entity called a high school curriculum. The wording of the issues reveals that all the criticism was directed toward the school curriculum: that presumably the college curriculum in English was in good shape; no hint that English majors were being badly prepared to face disadvantaged unpromising secondary youth. The scholars who could not put their own littered house in order were suggesting to English Education what to do about theirs--make it more like college English departments. Nothing was said about the explosion of knowledge that shattered whatever unity a college English department ever had, and drove English to invent dozens of little specialist publications of several hundred circulation to keep themselves from perishing: a profusion of "scholarship" that was driving high school teachers to more and more coverage to get it all in to more and more youth coming from ever lower segments of democratic society. Nothing was said about the "mere antiquarianism," "the trivial futility, remoteness from life. . .of much academic publication," and further, according to Wellek and Warren "the shocking inability of one scholar to communicate at any respectable abstraction with another scholar."

The Conference proposed two inquiries both directed to the schools not to college departments. First, is there a canon or corps of literature that constitutes the heritage that all youth should be exposed to--myths, legends, Bible stories, some classic novels, certain great authors? Despite the explosion of knowledge, there lingered a nostalgia for a list still thought to constitute a heritage when much of it needed no longer to be revived but integrated in new ways, or just looked up when required. The justification for this canon was called "furnishing the mind," that mind seemingly a kind of apartment instead of a tabula raza. The best that could be said of this simplistic rationalism about the nature of mind is that it was as crude and shallow as stimulus-response of the psychologists who tried to do without mind altogether; and yet English as furnishing the mind became a key slogan of the Conference. In short, literary humanism failed to examine the inert ideas and dry rot within itself, begging this supreme issue by invoking an immemorial cliché "the fundamental liberal discipline of English," the meaning of which the Conference left dangling throughout the Report.

The second inquiry of the Conference was directed toward how this canon could be articulated, be made sequential, and yet be accumulative, something college departments had more need of than the schools. Ironically, it was called "An Hypothesis to Test." This suggested quest was a surrender of literary humanism to sheer intellectuality, not to any hypothetical inquiry into actual curriculum practice. And so the idea of a spiral or cumulative organization of subject matter was not hypo-

thetically stated and experimentally tested anywhere unless the Carnegie Mellon Demonstration Center curriculum (1961-1963) be accepted as an "experiment," which was really a description of what was done, not a test.

The Conference Report neglected engagement, commitment, empathy, and celebration--the wide human gambit from blue-sky ecstasy to a descent into hell. To this excursion into bare cognition, add, a bit later, Brunerian process, the New Criticism, and the new grammar, "just good to know," and the very essence of humanism was gone--all was structure. Here was the ultimate in rationalism applied to making a curriculum.

Thus when Federal money at last came pouring into the study of English teaching via the Demonstration Centers (1961) a few years later, one Center after the other, as Robert Shafer pointed out, had for its mission the articulated, sequential, cumulative curriculum with process and structure thrown in. Certainly a "new" English: an English without the essence of humanism. This is not the place to critique the results of these Centers, which has never yet been done fearlessly and frankly; yet one might point out, for instance, how American regional writers most of whom had written out of indignation and agony were reduced to archetype, myth, and symbol: Graduate school was literally pushed into junior high; tight rationally concocted syllabi, much like college courses, were chopped up into neat daily lessons, leaving little conjectural thought for pupils and little teaching for the teachers. Here was the zenith of a priori rationalism in curriculum and method. About this time something called "the humanities" cautiously appeared in a few high schools--to repair what to them was a growing wasteland in English.

In tracing the course of radical empiricism in the teaching of English in the public schools, one perceives a further concession to English Education by the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board in its report FREEDOM AND DISCIPLINE (1965). Many reviewers of the Report missed the meaning of the title, which the framers explained in the Foreword but then forgot in the main part. The Report sketched in what it conceived English to be, and presented rather specific models for language, composition, and literature, all of which was termed the "discipline" in English study. Then it lightly suggested courses to prepare teachers to teach this kind of discipline, but left the courses wide open; which, to be filled in, becomes the freedom of English Education: that is, English will provide the discipline, and English Education the means to attain it--whatever way it considers best--a clear division of labor, each with its own responsibility. The report tended to be conservative about the discipline, which was shaped by a priori deductive logic; but liberal in its concession to means, which was seemingly a recognition of radical empiricism in determining method. Probably this abdication in favor of English Education was due to the Board's long collaboration with Educational Testing Service, whose very reason for being has been its constant experimental approach toward measuring education.

Three meetings within English Education around this time and somewhat later testify that the concession toward a scientific or research approach to the teaching of English in public schools was being seriously accepted. The Carnegie-Mellon meeting in 1962, the New York Conference in 1964, and the Minneapolis meeting in 1972, all explorations into the possibility of researching a discipline not long before thought impervious to experimental inquiry. Mostly through unconcern, default, and ineptitude of the leaders in English, English Education now had the field of method completely to itself, and there was only one way for it to go--toward research.

Recent research, in English Education, such studies as the development of syntax in children, by Strickland, by Hunt, and by Loban, Hoetker's PERSISTENCE OF THE RECITATION, the Squire-Appleby survey, the Purvis inquiry, the Florida State experiment in kinds of method--there are more--mark a growing, incipient autonomy of English

Education to rely on itself for needed theory in method. One cannot think of this kind of experimentation ever coming out of English, out of college English departments--even in respect to college teaching. (Probably the only influences "purely" from English, not from English Education, that have made a mark on some high school English classrooms are the dialectology of McDavid, the work of Fries and Markwardt in usage, the hero cycle of Fry, and the work of I.A. Richards--all having an empirical base. Paul Diederich, now at Educational Testing Service, and Francis Christensen, whose rhetoric is empirically derived, may be added.)

The Dartmouth Seminar (1966) came as a great shock to the Basic Issues curriculum of articulation, process, and root concepts, which, though it sounded experimental, was a rationalization of structure in method, an extrapolation from Bruner's experiment in his A STUDY OF THINKING (1956). The clash was basically between a revival of the intuitive logic of humanism and an attempted but aborted experimentalism in articulation in English Education. Freedom used in these discussions did not mean the freedom of English Education in respect to method--that is, to be divorced from English, as the Commission of English of the CEEB had suggested--but the freedom of pupils to become more fully engaged, "the need to make English a more humane study." Why in English--the very heart of hearts of humanism--should such a statement need to have been made at all? Rational structure as curriculum had seemingly robbed English of its humanity, its liberal spirit, at a time when new great writers, as well as brilliant critics, kept appearing year after year for decades. Despite a flourishing literature, rationalist pedagogy had reduced <u>homo humanus</u> to <u>homo sapiens</u>.

If one rereads Shugrue's ENGLISH IN A DECADE OF CHANGE (1968), one is amazed at the rapid succession of pedagogical theory in English during that time--a dramatic, fluid shifting from deliberate logical structure in curriculum making to free open mini-courses and electives (ENGLISH AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST, 1961; THE NATIONAL DEFENSE ACT, 1964; ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL, NASSP BULLETIN, 1967) Nearly all of this mercurial change issued either from an idealistic dialectic, Hegelean in nature, or a rational formulation of instruction without ever investigating the actual state of the American classroom; nothing said about the steady decline of English-as-humanism, for here all seemed optimism, progress, and growth. Squire's empirical study did not emerge until 1968, nor did that of Educational Testing Service until 1969, which found that despite this free-wheeling decade of conferences, seminars, committees, and commissions, the high schools were still tied to a <u>status quo</u> curriculum. In 1975, but seven years later, English in the high schools is splintered in all directions, the fruits of rationalism in method and curriculum making. (See the empirical evaluation by George Hillocks, 1971.) Now the most basic issue at present is this: whether to continue to make decisions in curriculum and method by the logic of rationalism--by conferences and by commissions--or to turn to an empirical and experimental examination of what instruction and curriculum is really like in America on which to base decisions in curriculum. English Education will itself have to reconcile literary humanism and experimentalism in pedagogy--to remind English that pedagogy still is, and has always been, the most pervasive and fundamental aspect of humanism in democracy.

IV

Two decades of conferences and reports did not bring to light that humanism--proclaiming to examine everything human--had been avoiding what was happening to itself. (Some humanists did challenge the trend: "The Treason of the Clercs," Julien Benda, 1928; "The Neo-Barbarians," Ortega y Gassett, 1932; "The Irresponsibles," MacLeish, 1940; "The Existential Revolt Against Essence," Kierkegaard, 1940; and "The Brutalizing Intellect," Barzan, 1959.) Therefore, it found its enemies everywhere else, in technology, scientism, industrialism, materialism, and in other disciplines seemingly appropriating its domain--anthropology, psychology, the "new"

history, cultural studies, sociology. As college English departments began to feel their loss of status, as well as pupils, they repeatedly found an adversary among the very teachers these departments had largely prepared, former English majors now at work in high school, who, baffled by the presence of the average workman's boy or girl, slum children, migrant children, the verbally disadvantaged, the rural poor, sought aid outside humanism.

All this time, college English departments were limiting their function within literary humanism. English was already restricting itself mostly to literature, and favoring the majors who were aiming to be scholars. Linguistics was being allowed to leave the department; freshman composition became a loose appendage like CCCC, or left to graduate students; rhetoric faded away, few cared to "humanize" non-majors, fewer wanted to risk a scholarly career teaching English as general education or as liberal education or as a "humanity." How could English guide them? The prospective teacher of high school English was taught to tread cautiously over a slippery terrain, careful to keep off the heresy of paraphrase, the fallacy of narrative plot, the affective fallacy, and the intentional fallacy, to steer meanwhile between the "myth of concern and "the myth of detachment," and, according to the Commission on English of the CEEB on the quality of instruction, to be "aware of the snare of diluted essence, the pitfalls of relevance, and the morass of the current fad." One might add another, the fallacy of misplaced humanism, a humanism that rails against relevance, but ignores how to derive excellence from non-relevance. Literary humanism over the centuries had ever bestowed its humanity on those who could read well enough to enter into great books, implying that in doing so other noble aims emerge incidentally--virtue, moral courage, integrity, wisdom--all of which are empty without action, but action humanism does not consider a measure, preferring the clever paradox to the kind deed.

College English departments actually seem no longer able or wholeheartedly willing to prepare teachers to teach English in the public secondary school. The last joint undertaking between English and English Education (MLA, NCTE and NASDTEC), GUIDELINES FOR A REPORT ON THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH (1967) was outmoded or inapplicable within a year. Little was said about what should go into these recommended courses and state departments, state legislatures, teacher associations, school officials, all are expanding and reforming the preparation of teachers of English. Actually, college English departments, once over the initial shock, might be happy radically to curtail their role in teacher preparation--to be left to do what they always wanted to do anyway, train the hard-core specialist only. They could then be humanists keeping within what they think to be essentially human. And, then, since English teachers for the public schools require a deeper humanity than literary humanism can offer, their preparation would be in control of English Education.

Thus, for a century, English Education has ever found itself in a squeeze between two main sources of theory about teaching: (1) those traditionally operating within English for five hundred years, based on an uncertain mixture of Platonic Idealism and Aristotelian Rationalism; and (2) those, much more recent (the early 19th century), ever arising, shifting, accumulating, tentative, from an amorphous realm called "education," fed from diverse springs from outside humanism. English Education, unlike any other field of pedagogy, must accept the agony of reconciling the values of language study, conventionally called humanism, and the objective radically empirical, often positivistic, values coming from a realm ambiguously called science. English Education is at present buffeted between the two worlds depicted by C.P. Snow: (1) English as scholarship, usually remaining aloof from experimentation but hissingly coiling when English Education seems to be foraging too far into that other non-humanist world; and (2) the field of education that dutifully extrapolates what it believes pertinent from a bewildering array of theory from the many fields of experimental science. Given this condition, dare English Education free itself

from English departments and go on its own? Kohl asks, "Can it mediate between the world of advanced subject matter and psychological knowledge and the world of the street and the school?

At this pivot between the two worlds English Education has some grave choices. How much of this other realm outside humanism may legitimately become part of the pedagogy of English Education, and the teaching of English still remain an art? This is the foremost issue in English Education today. The fate of English as a study will perhaps be settled here, rather than in any formulations about the substance of English hammered out in college departments in English. From this problem nearly all the other issues in English Education arise. For example, to what extent can English Education accept behavioral objectives, with all the consequences, and still retain whatever humanism is left to English? Perhaps, though, method is an aspect of humanism. Where are new insights into method, then, to come from? There is brilliant scholarship existing as bundles of theory to be piled and filed, impossible to be integrated, and a host of platitudinist, redundant, mediocre scholarship as well. (Contemplate the hundreds of papers listed in the "catalogue" of each annual meeting of the MLA for the past ten years!) But what loss of energy to sift it all! Who in English Education is big enough to ransack this vast field (when those in English seem unable or too career-strung to do it themselves) relate it to what appears pertinent from that other, even larger, world, and then fit it into the institutional arrangement called school? One of the chief services of the NCTE has been to make part of this vast store of concepts and theories known to those in English Education. But add to these the practices, "methods," materials, devices, gadgets, from the "other" world ("teaching resources"!), and there is such a surfeit that the freedom of the teacher to choose becomes chaos, an invitation to dig in anywhere at random and do as he pleases in the classroom.

Unfortunately, English Education cannot enter into this vision of synthesizing the rationalism of English and the experimentalism of science, for, at present, it has no view of itself except as an appendage to English. Under the dominance of English majoring, it must thus prepare its candidates at an abjectly low level of competence, and for the same reason no study of great significance to education has ever come out of English Education--nothing like Dewey's or Coleman's or Bruner's or Piaget's or Lewin's, or Micheljohn's, or Morrison's. It has no sense of battle, no mission to rescue English Education from a decadent humanism. In truth, the decline of humanism has brought English Education down with it, the proof of which one has only to peruse the increasingly trivial and superficial programs wrapped up in ridiculously high-sounding themes, of the last few annual conventions of NCTE and CEE. In a discipline where everything is basic nothing is basic.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"To be honored at Hyre Junior High School /Ohio/, one doesn't have to be a straight 'A' student.

The school recently held a dinner honoring 105 'groundhog' students in the school's cafeteria. A 'groundhog' is a student who raises his average from an F to a C, is always willing to help others, makes his club or organization go, unselfishly gives his time and energy to a project or overcomes a handicap, either physical or emotional.

'What we're doing is trying to build pride in the kids who normally don't get any recognition,' said Judy Bender, a language arts teacher who, with a colleague, conceived the idea." ("Students Who 'Try' Feted in Junior High," NY TIMES, November 9, 1975, p. 79)

ERIC

THE LITTLE CAR THAT COULD

Stephen Dunning, University of Michigan

(Below are excerpts of Steve Dunning's speech given at the San Diego Annual Banquet, November 27, 1975. At that time, Steve was President of NCTE.)

. . .

As though strengthened by adversity, loud, often persuasive voices are abroad, telling English teachers (and other public school persons, and college professors and administrators) what they should be doing, and how they should be doing it. These suggestions, or demands, are often models of clarity. On hearing them, heads nod, coast to coast. Education is as much a spectator sport as is football; rooters in the stands know just what each team should do. The school team?

"Back to the basics, rah, rah."

The college team?

"Raise the standards, lower grades.
Throw the recalcitrants out!"

Where the voices of critics have been loudest, and the messages have seemed clearest, we have sometimes capitulated to simplistic solutions. Responding to "Back to the basics!" we retreat to the worst basics from our worst seasons--to the rote drills and busy-work exercises that produce sterile environments and hostility from our students. What results would you predict, for five years hence, were we to put all our practice energies into daily grammar, usage, and mechanics drills? into narrow reading lists loaded with somebody's list of classics, but blessedly free from such sexy, godless, radical, un-American trash as SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE and TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD? What would you predict from a daily writing assignment graded rigorously on mechanics and form, but its content ignored?

You suspect me of stacking the cards. But last week those very books by Vonnegut and Harper Lee were censored by the critic teacher of one of my students; and for that school the school board has ruled that students are not to write papers on subjects that are "personal and controversial." That ruling may define an English teacher's hell. Can you imagine a deeper dammation than marking forever, non-personal, non-controversial papers? Forever? Aye, for all eternity?

So far as education is concerned, the main concerns in the public mind are surely accountability and testing. Censorship is sometimes big news, too--one teacher fired for assigning what some parent believed were naughty books; a teacher in another community censured for reading aloud from THE BIBLE.

What picture emerges of English teaching where accountability and testing are the canvas and paint?

The answer is obvious; the portrait is caricature. What is English teaching for? (Quickly now. Don't think.) Of course! Literacy.

What is the shortest, simplest route to literacy? Of course! Back to the basics. Now back in the good old days. . .

. . .

The public wants kids to be literate when they leave school. That means high school graduates who are able to read and use the messages in repair manuals and able to write understandable telephone messages; to follow voting instructions (however gobbledy-de-gooked) and to write clear directions; to read and write well enough to pursue additional education or self-education successfully; to read books for pleasure and to write (in diary or other private place) some feelings of love or anger, hope or regret.

> Lay people once said, 'I'd better watch what I say!' when meeting an English teacher. We had mysterious and powerful things going for us: we knew about <u>who</u> and <u>whom</u>; where apostrophes belonged; and who killed Duncan in MACBETH. But some of the myths surrounding our business have disappeared, and Crunch-weary parents can lash out, 'The hell with Duncan. My kid can't read and write!' (Stephen Dunning, "Equal Time. The Public and English Teachers: An Adversary Relationship?" ENGLISH JOURNAL, Sept. 1975, p. 9)

For the English teacher, then, accountability and testing imply a mandate for <u>literacy</u>. And literacy translates into "back to the basics." So long as the public holds a simplistic model for English teaching, the adversary relationship between us and them will worsen as frustrations on both sides grow and grow.

. . .

In our hard times and adversary relations lie unique opportunities. We can move strongly forward; we can go with the forces flowing around us; or we can yield, retreat before depressing headlines, inaccurate reporting, and simplistic solutions. The Crunch offers equal opportunities to the venturesome and to the fearful. This optimist sees three roles the National Council, you and I, can play.

Our first role is as student--to continue our investigations on how teaching works best, on the nature of language, on the possibilities of literature, on the satisfactions and deep joys of good writing and good talk freed from obsolete, elitist notions of what good writing and good talk are. So each of us in his way, as theoretician or scholar, as experimenter or innovator, can keep the discipline alive by giving it the attention it deserves.

Our second role is to ask some questions that bring our homework to bear on over-simplifications in the media and in the public mind. Things are not as simple as fearful persons want to believe. You and I know some things about accountability, we do, and it's time we identified some damaging aspects of accountability from the data already available in National Council publications. We know some things about testing, we do, and what we know is desperately needed by television reporters, by newspaper writers, and by legislators who have reported on various tests and have fed the current mania for "objectivity." We know some things about censorship, we do. We realize we have sometimes been the censors, and sometimes the victims of its destructive forces. We know some things about literacy, we do, about how language capacities are acquired, and where those capacities come from.

We know enough, that is, to ask larger questions that aren't hot enough to make good copy.

I want to ask of the next advocate of literacy who backs me up against the back-to-the-basics wall: Literacy for what? Literacy in and for itself? Literacy to survive the perils of a technological society? Literacy for the more frenzied pursuit of the good life? Literacy that satisfies test scores and accountability measures? Literacy for what?

Last year I said that our classes should orient to magnetic North. At magnetic North are humanity's deepest probelsm--not those of accountability, of censorship, or of relative performance. Instead, the deep problems of all peoples--hunger, for example, and various dreams for national destiny; over-population, for example, and dreams of peace, of freedom, of a healthful environment. Those aren't the <u>subjects</u> we teach; they are the goals for people and provide the reason for communicating being our subject. Solutions to such problems as hunger, indignity, or racism will require clear and imaginative uses of language. Is it merely playful to ask "Literacy for what?" and then respond "For communicating"?

ERIC

No, this goes beyond word play. Communicating denotes message-givers and receivers, for one thing. Communicating connotes the practice of language skills in credible contexts, not in isolation. Communicating means seeing the effects of one's writing and speaking on a wide variety of audiences. Literacy, narrowly defined, is surely not our subject. Communicating is: talk and thought beyond paper and print; communicating for credible purposes where imagination and creativity are at least as important as the performances measureable by tests.

Society is asking for graduates who can read and write, can function in society. If we put our best efforts into communicating, society will get from us something better--students who think and imagine, who talk and listen, who read and write effectively. The species must learn to communicate more fully, or it will one day not be. We must help our best communicators ready themselves to address those problems of all humanity.

Else why, really, why are we doing this thing? This English teaching? So that our students will pass tests with higher scores than students from a nearby community? Are we teaching only to keep the paycheck icumen in? (Admittedly the pressures of The Crunch add flavor to our daily bread.) Are we teaching English just because people have always taught English--anyway for the last 100 years?

No we're better than that. On good teaching days, we set up provocative language tasks in which youngsters find challenge and success; for some of those tasks, virtuosity is demanded; but others carry built-in approval. Students who have stretched out, and have succeeded, and learn that they have succeeded, will stretch out again. On good days we provide both the instruction and the audiences that worthwhile communicating requires.

Literacy for what? For effective, fulfilling communicating. People trying to communicate may have more questions (What are you trying to say?) than they have answers (A sentence is made of two basic parts.). People trying to communicate, experiment, reach out, and stretch language. Just as much clarity, correct sentences, and convention, communicating asks for metaphor, venturesome sentences, and individuality. In communicating classrooms are found joy, believable work, and varieties of ways of getting work done.

I've said our first role is student, our second is to ask deep questions. Our third, I believe, is to testify. To speak out. To bear witness. If we do our homework, if we confront the over-simplifications, we cannot in conscience stop short of sharing what we know where it will be useful. We, too, must communicate. The question is: How? How do we testify, get our vision of English outside the walls of our annual meetings, out beyond our classrooms and journals, out into the decision-making forums?

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"Lack of discipline is again named by the nation's adults as the top problem facing America's public schools today. Discipline has been named as the No. 1 problem of the schools in six of the last seven years as determined by these annual surveys of public attitudes toward education in the United States.
All persons surveyed were asked this question:
'What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?'
Here in order of mention are the leading problems faced by local schools:
1. Lack of discipline; 2. Integration-segregation problems; 3. Lack of proper financial support; 4. Difficulty of getting 'good' teachers; 5. Use of drugs; 6. Size of school-classes; 7. Crime-vandalism; 8. Poor curriculum, pupils' lack of interest (tie); 9. Parents' lack of interest, lack of proper facilities (tie); 10. School board policies." (George Gallup, "The Gallup Poll: Discipline No. 1 Problem," DENVER POST, December 21, 1975, p. 37)

BACK TO THE BASICS? SOME PERSISTENT QUESTIONS, SOME OLD ANSWERS

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ENGLISH TEACHERS? IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS, ENGLISH WAS FAR BETTER TAUGHT.

"English is probably both the least-taught and the worst-taught subject in the whole educational field. It is bad in the grade schools, worse in the high schools, worst in the college, while the university reaps the full benefit of this evil crescendo. The 'English' of the modern curriculum varies from a silly combination of 'Mother Goose' and the jargon of science or the shibboleths of religion to a disingenuous synthesis of antique philology and emasculated literature. No wonder some of the men and women who speak and write their language well would extend to prose the judgment passed upon poetry: English untaught is taught best. A teacher of English is so often a spoiler of English."

(Alexander F. Chamberlain, "The Teaching of English," PEDAGOGICAL SEMINARY, June 1902, p. 4)

WHY AREN'T ENGLISH TEACHERS TEACHING THE BASIC SKILLS? I MEAN THINGS LIKE SPELLING AND GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO STANDARDS ANYMORE?

"What should a pupil know in English when he enters the high school? My plea is for the fundamentals, the correct habits in the fundamentals. Would the high-school teachers object if the students came to them without having heard of narration, description, exposition, and argument; without ever having parsed a word in the English language; without having studied two-thirds of the principles of rhetoric; without ever having written a theme more than a paragraph in length; without being able to describe every scene in their literature and knowing exactly how every character in the masterpieces they have studied looked, acted, and was dressed, what he said and how he was regarded by others? I know I answer for a very large number when I say that if the pupils when they enter the high school can all read intelligently, can write correctly constructed sentences--no sentences run together and no floating dependent elements--can punctuate, and can spell a list of about two hundred common words which 50 per cent of our first-year high-school pupils are now misspelling; if they can do these things from habit--not occasionally but habitually--we shall welcome them with open arms."

(Susan Anderson Fish, "What Should Pupils Know in English When They Enter the High School?" ENGLISH JOURNAL, March 1914, p. 175)

"Why, in spite of the increasing emphasis upon English, and the improvement both in the editing of English classics and in textbooks on rhetoric, do high-school graduates continue to fall so far short of the eminently reasonable requirements of the normal schools? Why are they not only slipshod in expression and indifferent as to spelling and punctuation, but also sometimes glaringly ungrammatical in speech and writing? Why are their ideas so vague concerning the fundamental qualities of good composition and the obvious characteristics of the novel, the drama, the lyric? Why do they remember so little of the literature they have studied? Above all, why are they so unaccustomed to thinking for themselves and to asking questions about what they do not understand? They are earnest in spirit, and their interest in things of the mind, if not always a vital motive force, is at least easily aroused; but when it comes to ability to stick to a point, to exclude irrelevant matter, to follow logical order, to find the right word to clinch an important conception--to say nothing of knowledge of ordinary means of securing emphasis--in these acquirements they are often deplorably wanting."

(Sarah J. McNary, "A Few Reasons Why," ENGLISH JOURNAL, June 1912, p. 351)

"Fourth, ask a group of business men in any city and they will tell you that they are driven to distraction by stenographers who cannot spell and by clerks who cannot add, much less compute fractions; yet these persons have been educated in our public-

school systems at great public expense. Having had some experience in teaching classes of adult business women in the essentials of English usage, I know that they clamor for commas and rules governing them, for vocabulary, spelling, and for rules governing the use of 'who' and 'whom.' They say if they had been taught the rules, they would not now grope for the right expression. They are spending money for something which it is their right to have learned as graduates of our public high schools in recent years. Have we not swung to the left far enough, and is it not time to steer our course toward a saner middle ground?"

(Myriam Page, "The Other Side," ENGLISH JOURNAL, June 1937, pp. 443-444)

"'I find that the greatest lack in our Freshman is in grammar,' ran one comment, and it continues: 'My experience is that a very few come to us particularly well trained in grammar. But the overwhelming majority of students evince practically no knowledge of the subject. They often do not know even the parts of speech. I believe that grammar is suffering the most in college preparation.' Another teacher declared that 'the chief difficulty, beyond the crudest of errors, is perhaps in general organization.' From still another college comes the complaint that 'students are not so much at fault grammatically as they are empty of ideas. My struggle has been against a sleepy and easy rhetoric.' A fourth professor declared, 'We should like to have our incoming Freshmen able to read and write. Some possess only third-grade reading ability; many only sixth. Too many cannot spell, put periods at ends of sentences, or avoid gross grammatical errors.'"

(J.W. Beattie, "Does the High School Prepare for College English?" ENGLISH JOURNAL, November 1939, p. 714)

"One might perhaps pass over all the bad spelling, although it goes rather against the grain to graduate from any major law school men, who after three of four years still write 'negleganse,' 'defendent,' 'arest,' 'sueing,' 'priveledge,' and 'assaut and batery.' I have been told, and I do not question the statement, that there are many well-educated persons who are constitutionally incapable of learning to spell. It does seem odd that so many of them should congregate, year after year, in our law school. Surely there is something wrong when twenty papers, selected entirely at random, yield the following spellings of common, nontechnical words:

two (for too)	forsee	attact	oposit
haveing	beleaf	weppon	loose (for lose)
chanse	insolt	permision	delaid
rite (for right)	heith (for height)	useing	mallus (for malice)
ommision	speshal	recieve	pleeding
thret	hazerdous	gilty	deceipt
too (for to)	titel	writeing	lible (for liable)
dammege	tresspas	fense	bargan
alright	judje	probly	bussines
ofer	rong	distinkt	layed
criminial	alledge	vishius	persue

I am given to understand that reading is taught by the 'word' method nowadays in the primary grades and that very little attention is given to spelling--which may account for the foregoing list. But after all, I suppose that this may not be very important. Perhaps it is too much to ask that an attorney, an officer of the court and a gentleman, shall not be illiterate, so long as he can find a stenographer who can spell.

One might also overlook all the bad grammar, although it is difficult not to wince at 'could of been,' 'hadn't ought to of,' 'not done nothing,' 'had went,' 'when he done same,' 'these cases is,' and the like, on the part of college men seeking to enter a learned profession. I am told that the schools do not bother greatly about grammar now and I can readily believe it. Perhaps it does not matter; if no one uses grammar except the professors, an attorney may possibly do very well without it.

But it is not so easy to dismiss the appalling lack of ability to organize a

ERIC

paragraph or even a sentence, to say simply and clearly what is meant. For weary hours I have struggled profanely through dismal swamps of incoherence."

(William L. Prosser, "English as She Is Wrote," ENGLISH JOURNAL, January 1939, pp. 41-42)

"The vocabularies of a majority of high-school pupils are amazingly small. I always try to use simple English, and yet I have talked to classes when quite a minority of the pupils did not comprehend more than half of what I said. The etymology of words is almost entirely unknown to them. Very often, in using the dictionary, when the same word has different definitions, the wrong definition will be selected, notwithstanding the nonsense resulting from the selection. Forty years ago etymology was a regular study in most of the schools. Why it has been abandoned is incomprehensible to me: for any teacher can easily see, upon a moment's reflection, that, having mastered the literal meaning of a word, the applied meanings can be deduced much more readily than by any other means."

(M.W. Smith, "Methods of Study in English," JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS AND ADDRESSES, NEA SESSION OF THE YEAR 1899, Topeka: NEA, 1889, pp. 521-522)

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO STANDARDS IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION? STUDENTS TODAY CAN'T WRITE NEARLY AS WELL AS STUDENTS ONCE DID. AND MECHANICS, NOBODY TEACHES THEM ANYMORE.

"Every practiced inspector of schools knows what dreary reading the average school essay is. Some accomplished men of letters have recently given us the benefit of their half-humorous but still valuable and forcible criticism on this subject. Now one who looks into the matter closely will find two reasons for the unreadableness of that remarkable production, the school composition:

1. The pupil has no first-hand knowledge of things, and hence puts no real freshness, or thought, or observation into his sentences.

2. His formal instruction has given him no adequate command of his implements, and he, therefore, lacks that ready and forcible use of English words and idioms which is so essential to all strong and valuable composition."

(E.S. Cox, "English in American Schools," ADDRESSES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE NEA SESSION OF THE YEAR 1885, NY: NEA, 1886, p. 182)

"As regards the result of such teaching of English as is given in some of our best schools and academies, I may be pardoned for referring to my own observation. Since 1873, when Harvard College for the first time held an examination in English, I have read from four to five thousand compositions written in the examination-room upon subjects drawn from books which the candidates were required to read before presenting themselves. Of these not more than a hundred--to make a generous estimate--were creditable to either writer or teacher. This year I did not read the books, but one who did makes this report: 'Few were remarkably good, and few extraordinarily bad; a tedious mediocrity was everywhere.'

It is this tedious mediocrity which has amazed me year after year. In spelling, punctuation, and grammar some of the books are a little worse than the mass, and some a great deal better; but in other respects there is a dead-level, unvaried by a fresh thought or an individual expression. Almost all the writers use the same commonplace vocabulary--a very small one--in the same confused way. One year, after reading two or three hundred compositions on 'The Story of THE TEMPEST,' I found myself in such profound ignorance of both plot and characters that I had to read the play to set myself right again.

The authors of these discouraging manuscripts were, almost all of them,

'Just at the age 'twixt boy and youth,
When thought is speech, and speech is truth.'

They may be justly regarded as the picked youth of the country, many of them coming from the best families in point of culture and breeding, and from the best schools we have. They were all boys with blood in their veins, and brains in their heads, and

ERIC

tongues that could talk fast enough and to the purpose when they felt at ease. Many of them had enjoyed THE TEMPEST--as who that can understand it does not?--but somehow the touch of pen or pencil paralyzed their powers.

If the dreary compositions written by the great majority of candidates for admission to college were correct in spelling, intelligent in punctuation, and unexceptionable in grammar, there would be some compensation; but this is so far from being the case that the instructors of English in American colleges have to spend much of their time and strength in teaching the A B C of their mother-tongue to young men of twenty--work disagreeable in itself, and often barren of result. Every year Harvard graduates a certain number of men--some of them high scholars--whose manuscript would disgrace a boy of twelve; and yet the college cannot be blamed, for she can hardly be expected to conduct an infant school for adults."

(A.S. Hill, "English in the Schools," HARPER'S, June 1885, pp. 123-124)

KIDS READ SO POORLY TODAY THAT MANY SCHOOLS HAVE TO OFFER REMEDIAL READING CLASSES. ISN'T THAT PROOF THAT ENGLISH TEACHERS TODAY HAVE FAILED THEIR STUDENTS?

"Remedial reading, which was originally a return to the tutorial system, is now reduced to absurdity by being taught en masse! Remedial reading, under present conditions, is not the answer to those who cannot meet the normal reading requirements of the high school. Unless the taxpayers are willing to let one teacher spend her time with one of such pupils per hour over a period of several years, so that low reading may be brought up to the point at which books may make a difference in the pupil's life, remedial measures in high school are practically a waste of time."

(George H. Henry, "Is English on the Way Out?" ENGLISH JOURNAL, April 1942, p. 292)

SUBJECT MATTER--THAT'S WHAT'S IMPORTANT. WHY DO TEACHERS WORRY SO MUCH ABOUT KIDS AND SO LITTLE ABOUT WHAT KIDS SHOULD BE LEARNING IN ENGLISH?

"Since the essential purpose of the work in English is to develop the individual, the emphasis in the course must be upon expression. The term 'expression' is used rather than 'composition' because it is more inclusive and more natural. No healthy student ought, in those splendidly exuberant and spontaneous high school days, attempt to write 'correct compositons.' But they will eagerly respond to opportunities for self-expression and will enjoy learning to express themselves well. Pen and theme paper is only one method of expression, and somewhat artificial for most men. Expression, it could readily be proven by statistics, is more commonly oral. Sometimes it may take the form of reading aloud; more often it is plain conversation. These are the practical avenues of communication, so long neglected by the schools, in which the students have a live interest. We must take them to ourselves as our own in building our course in expression. And, obviously, as soon as we do so we shall find our emphasis in English work shifting from subject matter to pupil."

(Louis I. Bredvold, "Suggestions for Reconstruction in High School English," EDUCATION, April 1913, p. 493)

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY? THEY SEEM SO MUCH MORE CYNICAL THAN YOUNG PEOPLE USED TO BE.

"The high-school student today is also seeking some assurance that life--not just his own but human life--is valuable and has a future worth struggling to make better. I find many high-school students who feel that civilization is at an end; that futility and terror alone are their lot; that theirs is a hopelessly doomed generation, unlike any which has lived before."

(Lou LaBrant, "English in the American Scene," ENGLISH JOURNAL, March 1941, p. 207)

"This is a skeptical age. But it is also an age, as I see it, in which the search for truth, by the people as a whole, is more earnest and intent than it has ever been in any previous age. It is a hard-boiled age, an age in which youth is

not accepting dogma from its elders without checking up for itself. There is a new generation just now coming along which did not experience the war disillusionment. How that generation will react to life is still a mystery. I think, sometimes, that I see signs that it will not take quite such a hard-boiled view of everything. But I can sympathize most heartily with the generation, now in the thirties, which saw all of the old standards, everything that it had been taught was right, thrown overboard and smashed by the war. Everything it had been taught as truthful--or so these poor youngsters believed--turned out to be a lie.

All the old standards of honor and conduct seemed to crumble before its eyes. It came through the war utterly disillusioned and skeptical, but with an intense desire for new standards, for standards that it could prove and cling to, a yearning for the bald, naked truth such as has seldom been felt by any such considerable number of people at one time. And the books which it has read most eagerly, accepted most heartily, have been the books which purported to interpret the world of today in terms of life as these disillusioned young people believed it to be, and not in terms of an antiquated code, which had failed them and the rest of mankind when it was most needed.

I think I can discern signs that the literature of disillusionment is beginning to be replaced by a more constructive literature, that creeds which will work better than the old ones are beginning to be set up and accepted, and that the books which will win the greatest popularity in the decade to come will be those which exalt the new standards--standards and ideals compatible with what youth of today knows to be the truth about life, or believes to be the truth, which amounts, after all, to the same thing."

(Frank Parker Stockbridge, "What Are the 'Popular' Books--And Why?" ENGLISH JOURNAL, June 1931, pp. 448-449)

HOW CAN WE TEACH THE BASICS, OR ANYTHING ELSE FOR THAT MATTER, WITH CLASS SIZES THAT KEEP GOING UP AND UP?

"The amazing increase of attendance upon the public high school, combined with the general extension of the course in English over the entire high-school period, has congested the classes of the English teachers, especially in the large city, almost beyond endurance. From Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago come reports showing that it is common to assign to a single English teacher 5 or 6 classes, each containing from 30 to 40 pupils. When we remember that the success of the English work depends, especially in the case of composition, very largely upon individual guidance and adequate attention to the written papers, we can see that the assignment of such overwhelming numbers to the English teacher is fatal to results."

(James Fleming Hosic,ed., REORGANIZATION OF ENGLISH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Bulletin 1917, No. 2, p. 139)

"Though in any subject large classes are a distinct disadvantage, this is especially true of English. Success in English teaching depends upon personal contact between teacher and pupil and upon attention to individual needs which differ widely in the same class. With classes of more than twenty-five the teacher's personality is spread out too thin and adaptation of the instruction to individuals is reduced to the lowest terms.

Akin to the harm caused by large classes is that which results from the assignment of too much work to the teacher. That the proper preparation of a lesson in English demands more time than that of lessons in other subjects; that the teaching of a class in English with the enthusiasm necessary to the highest success uses up more nervous energy than the less exhausting methods employed in other subjects; that the correction of composition imposes upon the teacher of English a task of the most exacting nature for which there is no equivalent in other subjects: these are facts generally conceded by teachers of all branches. And yet the Powers that make out schedules and assign classes usually give the teachers of English the same number of

classes and the same number of pupils as the teachers of other subjects. Usually, I say, for I know of one school--may the number of its kind increase!--where English teachers are given one period a day fewer than other teachers."

(Ernest C. Noyes, "Ideals Versus Realities in High-School English," JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS AND ADDRESSES, NEA, 1908, p. 654)

WHAT'S BEHIND THE "RETURN-TO-THE-BASICS" MOVEMENT?

"Certain influences are at work in public education today which indirectly affect to a considerable degree the problems of teaching English. One is the program of financial retrenchment and the three R's for national defense. Another is the current organized attack upon the left wing of progressive education by a group of men who disapprove of its social, economic, and educational views and are at the same time committed to a program of reduction of costs in the public schools. Still another is the effort on the part of certain leaders in education to reduce the time and recognition given to English in the schools because of their conviction that, as it is now taught in many places, it makes little contribution to the fundamental objectives of secondary education today. A fourth is the lively dispute in progress throughout the country over a return to the old emphasis upon mental discipline through a program of the critical and analytical reading of the 'great books.'"

(Dora V. Smith, "Today's Challenge to Teachers of English," ENGLISH JOURNAL, February 1941, pp. 101-102)

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

Spoofs are rare in any talk about the basics, but here's one in the form of a letter to the editor:

"I think it's time the teachers of this country shaped up. Let's face it, our education system needs complete devamping. First off every administrator and teacher should receive a one-half reduction in salary. Fire the janitors, maintenance personnel, secretaries and nurses. Close the cafeteria and let everyone bring a lunch.

After all, teachers and pupils used to sweep out the classroom, stoke the furnaces and dust the erasers. They can do it now. Turn off the air conditioning (they can sweat it out) and lower the thermostat for with class size doubled there should be adequate body heat to keep everybody warm.

The sport's program could be defrilled to two sports, football and basketball and one coach (if he's worth his salt) should be able to handle both. If another coach is really needed the superintendent or principal could pitch in and help out. As for the band, why one band director should be able to manage the school's entire music program. If the kids want uniforms bad enough they could earn the money to buy them with car washes, bake sales and other sundry ways.

As for girls' sports, let's face it cheerleading, baton twirling and boy-watching are exercise enough in and of themselves for any young lady.

Those frilly and costly courses like home economics and shop should be struck from the curriculum. The kids can learn these simple skills at home from Mom and Dad the way we did.

Face it teachers, we all once learned in this manner so why not return to the good old days. With this devamped system of education school budgets will shrink to minute skeletons of their former selves. Taxpayers will be happier and so will future teachers because if they're going to earn $4,000 a year we can't expect them to invest over $10,000 in a college education. So let's reinstitute the normal and schools and certify teachers for life after two years of training.

We need to get back to the basics. After all, you and I learned under these conditions and what was good enough for us should be good enough for the kids of today.

Then we couldn't gripe about these teachers who have the gall to apply for food stamps and welfare for then they would really be deserving. (ARIZONA REPUBLIC, Sept. 16, 1975, p. A-7)

ERIC

THE BACK TO THE BASICS ISSUE AND FILM STUDY

Pat Stewart, Miami High School, Miami, Arizona

The hue and cry of late, across the land has been one of "back to the basics." Perhaps it is partially attributable to the present popularity of nostalgia, and thoughts of the good old days when people "really learned" the "three R's." The fact that the Bicentennial, with all of its publicity, is rapidly approaching has probably lent momentum to the movement.

We live in a period of confusion and rapid progress in many areas. Values and technology are constantly changing, but people do not adapt to change easily. Therefore, they want to cling to, or return to, previously held ideas, methods and values.

These, of course, are only a few of the numerous factors influencing the "back to the basics" issue. The fact remains, however, that large segments of the public are demanding a return to the basics, and as a tax supported institution serving the public, the schools must lend an ear to their demands.

The first step perhaps, should be to ask what are the basics? When people request a return to the basics, what do they mean?

Are they referring to eliminating all courses at the high school level except "reading, riten, and rithmatic"? Or do they wish to see a greater concentration on the basic areas of study within the present course offerings. Perhaps, many, after careful study, would willingly accept a greater concentration on basics within the present curriculum.

The schools of today are expected to prepare the student for the world of the future. Parents want their children to receive vocational or college preparation so that they can fit into tomorrow's world.

In recent years, many English departments have worked long and hard at developing elective programs containing courses such as mass communications, humor, mystery and suspense, mythology, creative writing, science fiction and film. Are these courses of no value? Should we discard them and return to "readin and riten?"

The answer to these questions must be an emphatic no! Absolutely not! The electives will not be tossed aside and forgotten. For today's student "readin and riten" are a basic requirement, but more than the mere basics must be learned. A person today, who has only mastered basic subjects, has a severe handicap.

Why not learn more than the basics? Why, for example, can't a student take a film class, learn the basics and progress beyond those to film interpretation, critical analysis, the elements of film making, camera usage, etc. Can we justify handicapping our future generation by only allowing them to learn the basics.

According to Kuhns and Stanley in "Exploring the Film," the average person has spent more time watching films by the time he finishes high school than he has spent actually attending classes in grades 1-12.

He has spent approximately 15,000 hours watching films and 10,800 hours attending school. Shouldn't a person have, at least, a little knowledge and analytical ability in relation to something to which he devotes so much of his time.

It is a well known fact that films have created various social problems. Dr. Steinfield, U.S. Surgeon General, says "the overwhelming consensus is that

televised violence does have an adverse effect on members of society." It is estimated that by the time a child is fifteen, he will have witnessed 13,400 killings on TV.

Often crimes are duplicated very shortly after a film has been aired. A recent case in point was a midwest murder. After watching a filmed torch killing on TV, two young men proceeded to reenact the crime almost following the script to the letter. The result was the tragic and painful death of a young woman and the imprisonment of the men.

An example of a lesser problem is the shark mania sweeping the country as a result of the film JAWS. People are "sighting" more sharks than ever before, and some are now afraid to swim in the ocean.

These cases are proof that people can be heavily influenced by films. Can, then, the subject be one of so little importance that it should be relegated to the scrap heap and replaced by the "more important basics."

Why can't the basics "readin, and riten" be combined with film study. Must one practice reading only certain types of materials, or can reading speed and comprehension be as easily mastered when studying about and analyzing films as when reading any other type of material.

Isn't it as possible to learn to write narration, description, exposition, argumentation or critiques through these mediums as any others. Who can say that a student can learn descriptive writing better when writing about MACBETH than he can when composing an essay on JAWS.

The average to poor student is the main aim of the "back to the basics" push. What parent of a poor to average student can claim that his son or daughter will put forth more effort when writing a paper involving MACBETH than he would for one relating to JAWS. In many schools, in this state and the nation as well, the dilemma of the English teacher has been to get some of his poor to average students to do "any" work at all.

When, a very few years ago, we all devoted our time to English I, English II, English III and English IV whose content was as interesting and exciting as the course titles, many of the poorer and even average students didn't bother to turn in any written work, much less do the reading assigned. They had no motivation to do so.

Today's generation finds movies exciting and interesting. They devote a lot of time to watching them; and the same kids who refuse to do other assignments will eagerly devote time to analyzing and reading about film.

When the are parents requesting when they ask for a return to the "basics"? Do they want schools to return to uninteresting, nonrelevent subject matter; or do they want more practice in basic skills plus some of the so called "frills" like film and mass communications, which are an important part of life today?

Maybe what the public really needs, when they demand a return to the basics, is more information from their local schools concerning their curriculum offerings. This would rid them of their mental images of Film classes where students do nothing but sit through hundreds of films during a semester totally mesmerized by the silver screen, or Humor classes where students spend a semester reading comics. (Parents mental conjectures rarely include visions of Shakespeare's humore being studied.)

Perhaps this should be the charge of school staffs and administrations throughout

the country. For if an informed public is not created, the schools could be forced to return to the "basics" when the need for today and tomorrow is really the "basics" plus as much additional and in-depth learning as possible.

An adult today, who can function in "readin and riten" only at a basic level, must struggle to survive; and this is not the type of life for which we wish to prepare our children.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"There is a story, often repeated in Tanzania, about the Christian missionaries who took over the schooling in a Wachagga village and taught with great dedication the basic skills of readin', 'ritin', 'rithmetic, and reverence for the Lord. The missionaries did a fine job, sanctified by their own zeal, and when they left, all the young Wachaggans in the village had mastered the basics and could read, 'rite, 'rithmetize, and revere. By all the young Wachaggans, that is, we mean the sole two youngsters who accidentally survived the lions, sharks, drought, heat, European clothing, etc. This experience gave rise to the old Tanzanian proverb, 'Caveat discipulus,' which translates roughly 'Beware of pedagogues peddling basic skills.'

The Wachagga in their savage innocence recognized too late a truth about basic skills which is overlooked by an equally overwhelming number of Americans and American educators in their civilized ignorance. That the basic survival skills in any society are determined by the actual nature of that society itself and not by misperceptions or well-intentioned wishes about the nature of that society or culture. This civilized ignorance is evidenced in the increased public and professional outcry for a return to 'good ole basic education' whose 3R basic skills were based on a view of a 'good ole culture' which is, empirically speaking, long gone. Like the Wachaggans, we are in danger of losing an entire generation unless we examine the nature of our culture as it exists and the nature of the forces which set its tone and emphases before we decide a priori upon the skills needed in that culture.

In preparing our proposal we considered basic skills as those competencies necessary for one to realize a meaningful and autonomous life in the mainstream of his culture. From the Wachagga we learned that those basic competencies are determined by the nature of the culture. We also realized that as the forces which set a culture's tone and emphases change, it is reasonable to expect that the role of those competencies which have served as basic skills in the past also changes." (Jon Dunn, Kit Laybourne, and Andres Steinmetz, "A New Kind of Writing," MEDIA AND METHODS, April 1970, p. 39)

"More important, education should prepare people not just to earn a living but to live a life--a creative, humane, and sensitive life. This means that the schools must provide a liberal, humanizing education. And the purpose of liberal education must be, and indeed always has been, to educate educators--to turn out men and women who are capable of educating their families, their friends, their communities, and most importantly, themselves. . .To be educated in this sense means also to know something of the experience of beauty--if not in the sense of creating it or discoursing about it, then at the very least, in the sense of being able to respond to it, to respond both to the beauty of nature and to the art made by our fellow men. . .To be educated also means to understand something of how to make our intentions effective in the real world--of how to apply knowledge to the life one lives and the society in which one lives it. The aim of education, as Alfred North Whitehead has written, 'is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge.' Indeed, 'a merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God's earth.'" (Charles E. Silberman, CRISIS IN THE CLASSROOM, NY: Random House, 1970, pp. 114-115)

ERIC

FORWARD TO A BALANCE IN THE BASICS

Thomas R. Giblin, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

Do any of the following sound familiar?

Mr. A.: "The electronic media have made reading practically obsolete; we can no longer compete with TV, film, records, etc. Kids and adults get most of their information and entertainment from these mediums and they don't even want to read anymore!"

Mrs. B.: "Reading is still the single most important source of information and entertainment in a civilized society; we must not give in to this overly present-tense generation! Reading is and will continue to be the most important thing we teach anyone--the printed word is alive and well!!!"

Ms. C.: "Writing with paper and pen is no longer important--people only have to write that way in school! The world has changed; we should be teaching people to communicate through film, computers, ESP--that's where it's at today."

Dr. D.: "What's happened to writing instruction today? All those frills and electives in the high schools have created graduates without minimal ability in spelling, punctuation, complete thoughts, paragraph organization. . .and worst of all, no one seems to care! It's time we get back to the basics!!!"

These fabricated but close to real quotations are quite representative of the debates being heard today regarding at least two of the conventional 3 R's. It seems that educators resort to extreme positions where they are either into reading and writing the way they have always been, with paper-pen-print dominating, or they are into the idea that any medium is cool. The print dominated people fear that using any medium other than print is a frill that will only serve to dilute the print dominance they wish to protect. The any medium people are convinced that as long as the student values the communication process, the medium is relatively unimportant.

A common element in most of these extreme positions centers on the <u>limited definitions</u> that the people employ. As an illustration, if one were to consult several reputable dictionaries to extract a definition of reading and writing, a consensus definition might look like this:

read v.t. 1. to take in the sense of; to have an idea; to think or suppose; to understand a language; to take a certain view; to attach a meaning; to utter aloud; to understand the significance

write v.t. 1. to set down, especially for others to read; to compose; to form letters, symbols, words; to convey; to trace or inscribe on a surface

These definitions do not give any more ammunition to the print-dominated faction than they give to the any medium camp. It seems abundantly clear that reading and writing are <u>processes</u> that may employ <u>many mediums</u>. In reading, it is possible "to take in the sense of" a poem, a TV show, a gesture, a song, a bumper sticker, writing on a bathroom wall, the book JAWS or the film JAWS. It is equally as possible for all of these illustrations to be subject to supposition, a certain view, or any of the other actions to be found in most definitions of reading. In writing, it is possible to "set down" or "to compose" or to do any of the other actions associated with writing through a poem, a TV show, a gesture, a song, a bumper sticker, writing on a bathroom wall, a book like JAWS or a film like JAWS.

ERIC

It also seems quite clear that the debates about reading and writing are usually debates about the medium to be employed to read and to write rather than the actual process of reading and writing. In general, schools are in the business of teaching people to read print, rather than teaching the many ways to read; and schools focus on teaching people to write print, rather than teaching people the many ways to write. To teach only print is to teach but one aspect of the process, just as to teach only film study is to teach but one aspect of the process.

For example, the word "travel" is a word for a journey or a movement from one point to another, and, as with reading and writing, it is a process word. During the cave people school days, travel was probably studied in terms of people and animals walking. Today, however, we all know that travel is a process that can be examined through a bicycle, a train, a car, a bus, a balloon, a submarine, an airplane, a space ship! It would be absurd to limit our students' investigation into travel by focusing only on walking!

It seems equally as absurd to limit our study of reading and writing to print, but much of the current "back to the basics" movement is toward a return to the good old days when things were less complicated and print was the major medium of communication. Going back to such a limited definition for reading and writing will only result in limited students in a world where we need balanced students, students capable of dealing with the multiple ways we need to read and to write.

I believe we must take a strong effort to go forward to the basics by putting some balance into reading and writing, and two suggestions come to mind:

(1) educators have a responsibility to prepare students to read and to write through many mediums, not just in print or not just in film or not just in. . .

(2) educators have a responsibility to personalize their teaching in such a way that the learner's success with reading and writing in many mediums is more important than the sequence in which the mediums of the process are learned.

These suggestions mean, for example, that the reading of television is just as important as the reading of classical literature; that the process of composing with a camera is just as important as writing with a pencil; that reading people's gestures is just as important as examining their poems. The key ingredient to any of these examples is the sequence in which these activities are encountered is not as important as the fact that the student finds skill and joy in the process. There is absolutely no evidence to support the common practice that writing and reading print must precede writing and reading in other mediums!

Following these suggestions would mean that some students, for example, might not learn to read print by the end of grade one, but they might be pretty sharp at reading television, OR it might better be said that by the end of grade one some students will not have failed at nor learned to dislike reading print, and they have succeeded at and have learned to enjoy reading television. Such an approach will go a long way toward insuring that these students will eventually, when the time and situation is best for them, get into print as easily as they succeeded with television.

With such a balanced strategy, these students will leave high school with multiple ways to read and to write. Today, that's pretty basic!

ERIC

FORWARD TO THE BASICS
(AND AWAY FROM THE PSEUDOBASICS)

Collett B. Dilworth, Fayetteville City Schools, North Carolina

"Forward to the basics" is a phrase used by James Squire during a recent English education conference at Pembroke State University in North Carolina. What Dr. Squire meant by it was that there are fundamental skills which schools should increasingly try to foster no matter what the prevalent educational philosophy might be, and that it is very desirable for educators to strive to improve their teaching of these skills. According to this line of thought it seems that we teachers might educate our students better than ever before if we refine proven techniques and discover and apply new techniques of fostering student growth in these basics. Obviously such a development requires that educators progress in the art of pedagogy, not regress in ways implied by the phrase "back to the basics." Nevertheless, the notion of going "back" to some bygone period when certain basics seemed closer to the heart of the curriculum is becoming more and more widespread. As this notion gains strength, it deserves greater scrutiny by those of us who are responsible for curriculum in our schools and who wish to progress forward rather than regress back.

One very useful method of scrutinizing is to attend to the lexicon of those who wish to "go back" and to assess the referents of certain of their key words. Such an inquiry reveals that there are four verbs very important in thinking about going "back" to the basics:

1. One of these is "to expose," which in its usual context turns out to mean "to situate in proximity." Thus when someone says, "Our students need to be exposed to the great works," what is meant is that the students should sit periodically with certain books, preferably open, no more than inches away from their bodies. There is also usually an oral element of this situation in that during the same time the student is situated in the proximity of the great work, he/she should also be in the same room where the classic is the topic of audible verbiage. "Exposure" might be typified in the comparison, Macbeth as radio active isotope.
2. A second important verb is "to cover." The definition of this word is "to cast a shadow upon." A context in which it might be found is as follows: "When I was in school, we covered the Romantic Period, but now all they do is read trash." The meaning here is that the speaker sat with his/her head so inclined that it blocked the light from a text that included poetry by Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. We might typify "covered" in the phrase "Ode to the Nightingale" as shrouded corpse.
3. A third verb is "to do," which can be understood to mean "to undertake the ritual of." This particular usage is encountered in such contexts as, "We ought to do the objective compliment in the ninth grade instead of waiting until the tenth." The statement means that a group of 14-year-olds and an adult should engage in a highly structured pattern of behavior usually in the form of a teacher harangue eliciting a student trance. The direct object as ceremony is an appropriate figure for this perspective.
4. Finally, the words "to go over" constitute a key phrase, which usually means "to repeat aloud." This meaning is to be understood in the statement, "We should go over pronouns more often." What happens when a topic is gone over is that students state publicly exactly those lists of words or sentences or ideas which they are told to state. Such behavior can be characterized as the he, she, it litany.

Now all of these key words are indicative of a perspective centering on what might most appropriately be called the "pseudobasics" of English. What makes an

English curriculum pseudobasic is its failure to advance at least this fundamental objective of English education: to increase the student's abilities to gain and to render experience through language. The key word here is, of course, "experience," which naturally involves the full range of sensory, affective and cognitive abilities. If research into the development of languaging ability tells us anything, it tells us that there is a close relationship between the growth of articulateness and the intensity of need and extent of opportunity to make articulate sense out of experience. We can thus conclude that the members of an English class who are progressing forward to the basics will be engaged on their own initiative in a great deal of reading for the imaginative experience of literature and a great deal of investigating of their own important ideas and feelings through writing, speaking, listening and looking.

Conversely the pseudobasics, rather than centering on students, center on topics deemed good in and of themselves. In this light one alternative to giving students significant experience with which to cope is to give them exercise in a topic. The idea is that since the topic is good, association with it (exposure to it, covering it) will result in some of the good rubbing off on the student. In some instances an exercise might even be considered enjoyable, as when a teacher claims that, "My kids like to diagram sentences and ask to do it." In the long run, though, such enjoyment is usually recognized by all concerned as mere titillation and is really not the most important consideration. The point is that if a certain subject matter is graced by the approval of tradition or literary scholarship, then it has the necessary and sufficient criterion for inclusion in the pseudobasic curriculum.

Obviously we must not be influenced by such specious thinking. We must recognize that people, not subject matters, live life and that only people can improve living through language. The idea that some literary work or grammatical paradigm is good in itself ignores this fact, for since people are the experiencing agents, no subjects can be experienced and valued unless somebody chooses to do so. For people, goodness is a human perception always useful in human ways even if only to give us satisfaction in the abstract observation of pattern and order. And since choices lie within people and not within books, the basic approach to English education requires that curricular and methodological decisions be engendered from a consideration of the people in the classroom. Going forward to the basics, therefore, means abandoning the covering, exposing, doing, and going over of a curriculum in favor of optimizing conditions under which students undergo the rigorous, exhilerating activity of encountering and making articulate experience themselves.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"Performance contracting, once highly touted as a method for improving student achievement, has not lived up to expectations, according to a study conducted by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, N.J.

The service, which undertook the study for the United States Office of Education, reported yesterday that 'performance contracting, over-all, did not fulfill its goal of raising student's achievements as measured by test scores.'

In its announcement, the service noted that under performance contracting, an organization, usually private and profit-making, is contracted by a school system to develop instructional programs.

'In some cases, the contracting organization may be the teaching staff of the school itself,' the service said. 'Either way, payments vary according to the gains in students' test scores.'

The testing service said it had found in its study that performance contracting had not played 'a significant part in introducing educational innovations,' which it described as 'another early hope of some educators.'" ("Spur to Students Called a Failure," NY TIMES, October 26, 1975, p. 39)

BASIC BACKWARDNESS

Charles Weingartner, University of South Florida

It has been said that on one occasion Gertrude Stein was trying to describe her home town and that the best way she could think of to sum it up was to say, "When you get there there isn't any there there."

A variation on that line could be used to sum up the "basics" that some of our more regressive fellows think that there is some way to "get back to." Not only were there never any "basics," there was never any "back to" to get to.

The simple-minded notion that "readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic" were or are "basics" is congenial only to the kind of witless mentality that finds "fundamentalism" of any kind a source of the kind of reassuring misconceptions that foster the illusion of certainty -- about anything.

It turns out that regression is the characteristic mode of this kind of fear-ridden personality. In times of stress and anxiety (which seem to be all times in all places) these seekers after certainty regress into the illusions of an earlier time and place, since they regard any contemporary illusions as somehow inferior to older ones. They seem to feel a kind of mystical reassurance as they move backwards into the future. This is not, then, a procedure that is susceptible of a rational discussion. Most human procedures are not susceptible of a rational discussion. Most human problems are not susceptible of a rational solution either, as the presence of so many endless and increasing human problems should clearly illustrate. Since most human procedures that can be identified are also, simultaneously, problems, it is apparent that we are, as usual, in for many more problems than most of us have the energy to contemplate, much less to try to remedy. This is one reason why things always seem to get worse. Things not only seem to get worse, they do get worse. This is usually called "progress."

So, we have in the current "back to basics" movement simply another form of basic backwardness, or regress in response to "progress."

Just in case you didn't know, not many people ever were any good at "readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic." You can look at primary documents relating to the school business at any point in time and place and find reams of stuff deploring the inability of students (many of whom grow up to be people) to read or write or do arithmetic, or know "basic" historical "facts" or titles of "basic" bits of literature or "basic" geographical data (such as where they are at any given moment in relation to any other given place). We recently had a national survey that was unique in at least one respect: it did not focus solely on "students." It included the general population, and guess what: the "findings" revealed that most people loose on the streets are incapable of figuring out the mileage that their cars get, or the cost per ounce of any kind of canned goods, or how to balance their check books. These people are also taxpayers and voters, and they want to know why kids in school don't know the "basics." One of the main reasons -- not a currently popular one to articulate -- is that they are dumb. Dumb people are not good at school stuff -- well, at least not at conventional school stuff, some of which can be found in simple forms even outside of school. And, as the population continues to increase the probability of more dumb people being loose on the streets is much greater than that of more smart people being loose on the streets. This is one human form of Gresham's law. If you don't know what Gresham's law is then you weren't paying attention in school. School is about the only place you are liable to hear something like Gresham's law described, but there is a declining possibility of that too, since "equality" and "freedom" are now two of the most common words loose

ERIC

in the language and their frequency of invocation has made it unpopular to suggest that 1) all people are not as a matter of fact "equal" in all respects, and 2) that there are limits to everything that human beings can (and probably should) do. Item number 1 is dealt with by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. in his short story "Harrison Bergeron," and item number 2 is dealt with by the Greeks in their word "hubris."

Since hardly anybody was ever any good at handling words (especially written words) and numbers to begin with, it is curious that as more dumb people are populating the surface of the earth the expectation that they will be good at handling words and numbers is increasing rather than diminishing. So much for rationality--again. If you don't know about "Harrison Bergeron" or "hubris," and if I were in the business of deploring, guess what I would do.

Let me give a couple of examples to "prove" (for all the good it will do) that the ability to write was never widely enjoyed -- even long before the magic electronic media revolution.

In 1870, the dean of the Harvard medical school declared that "written examinations could not be given because most of the students could not write well enough." Harvard did not have an open admissions policy in 1870, please note. And, in 1873, Francis Wayland Parker presented the following report to the Quincy, Massachusetts school board:

> The pupils could parse and construe sentences and point out the various parts of speech with great facility, repeating the rules of grammar applicable in each case, yet were utterly unable to put this theoretical knowledge to any practical use, as they showed when called upon to write an ordinary English letter.

Now, it is necessary to point out here that our current fellows suffering from basic backwardness suffer from a compound illusion with reference to "basics." One element in their illusion has to do with a knowledge of grammar, parts of speech, and related taxonomies. They really believe that knowing this junk bears some relationship to the ability to write well. Parker figured out more than a hundred years ago that this was not so. But, Parker wasn't dumb. He was very smart, and figured out better ways to have kids try to learn how to make acceptable marks on paper with their fists: today what he developed would be called "open education." Despite sixty years of research reaffirming Parker's subjective judgment, the basic backwarders are out to eliminate open education and just about anything else that might make some sense. So much for rationality -- again.

The kinds of school procedures that Parker developed led John Dewey to refer to him as "the father of progressive education." Those who are basically backward also suffer from the illusion that "progressive education" is the source of all educational evil, thus demonstrating, again, their need to get everything backwards. It is conventional schooling with its relentless, mindless pursuit of the kinds of taxonomies that Parker described as sterile that compounds the problems produced by increasing numbers of dumb people. But then, these dumb people end up in positions of responsibility in the school business as well as everywhere else, including the military, the federal government, politics in general, and large corporations. If you need evidence of relentlessly dumb decisions being made and articulated for, say, the last 100 years, just check the record on those categories of human procedures. As it turns out, we have had in the United States in the 20th century only two presidents who could talk in a way that any fully functioning literate person could bear to listen to. They both happen to have been democrats, and they both happen to have been lousy at handling the kinds of editing details that most English teachers shrivel their brains at "correcting." The number of republican presidents we have had who virtually

couldn't even talk (to say nothing of not being able to walk with some ease if not grace) is simply depressing. Despite the magic of the electronic mass media making their incomprehensible gibberish available to all without any effort, these inarticulate bumblers and liars were enormously "popular" with the taxpayers and voters. What are we to make of that bewildering fact? Or is it just another illustration of the curious consequences of our romantic views of rationality?

Which leads me to suggest some "basics" that have little to do with the current misconceptions of what is "basic." The overriding basic ability that we all need to cultivate is the ability to detect crap-- whenever and wherever it appears. It may not be possible to achieve this noble objective, but what the hell, it's worth a try. Even if we could make it with only 50% of the population, our quality of life would improve by at least 1000%. We simply wouldn't take seriously (which suggests another basic ability the basically backward will never accept, much less think of) the blatherings of politicians, presidents or otherwise; nor would we buy the paranoid and catatrophically myopic delusions of the military which cost us more than half of our gross national product every year; nor would we hold still for the ritualized lying by our corporate "leaders" who rip us off -- regularly -- in the most despicable ways while lying to us about everything including about how they are improving our quality of life while destroying our environment. We might even be able to smile wistfully, if not benignly, at the dumb, basically backward types who want to make things worse in school while believing fervently that they are making things better.

That kind of basic crap detecting is the most operational and practical and valuable -- for everyone, every day of the world -- kind of ability that can be identified. How come it isn't obvious to all? Are the basic misconceptions from which we suffer as a society so irrversible and irremediable that we can't even make a gesture in the direction of formal training in crap detection? Or is it just a form of death wish that the death lovers insist that we all act out?

Death lovers, necrophiles as Erich Fromm called them, are the original back to basic dummies, and they comprise a clear and present danger to us all. The CIA and the FBI provide, alas, the most visible examples of what happens when a bunch of death lovers gain power. Who cares how well they can read or write. Their paranoid delusions comprise the most palpable threat to our constitutional form of government on the face of the earth. Is there anything more basic than that?

In case you are not familiar with the characteristics of necrophiles as Fromm described them, let me recount them here. You may not how appropriate they are to the profiles of those who are basically backward.

Fromm put it this way:

> The /necrophile/ is attracted by all that is against life: he craves for certainty, and hates uncertainty; he hates life which by its own nature is never certain, never predictable, rarely controllable. In order to control life, life must be fragmented; cut into pieces that is killed! Death, indeed, is the only certainty in life. The necrophilous person smells death everywhere. Just as Midas transformed everything he touched into gold, so the necrophilous person is fascinated by all that is not alive. He likes to talk about sickness, death, burials, money, gadgets, and punishment. The necrophilous person is attracted by all that does not grow, by everything that is static, by the purely mechanical. He would transform the organic into the inorganic. He approaches life mechanically and bureaucratically, as if all living persons were merely things. He prefers memory to understanding, having to being. He is attracted only to that which he possesses; hence, a threat to his possessions is a threat to his life. And precisely because he is afraid of life which he can not control, he

is attracted to all that is mechanical, to gadgets, and to machines which he can control.

It is hardly necessary to stress that contemporary technological civilization encourages this attitude. Our system tends to make people part of the machine, or subparts of the parts--all unified by the self-same program transmitted to every one through the same education, the same radio, the same television, the same magazine.

The question arises: Where are we headed? If we go on losing aliveness, will we not end up as frightened, isolated, unproductive particles, unfit to live and eventually preferring mass suicide to unbearable boredom?

On the other hand, the necrophilous person--the person with a greatly reduced love of life--can not react responsibly because he can not respond! The only principle by which he decides is that of duty; that is, obedience to "law and order." In acting according to this principle, he also satisfies his own passion for control and the exercise of power over others. To put it differently: by doing one's duty, one may negate one's responsibility.

Today, in a civilization in which everything has become a commodity and everybody has become a total consumer, there are two opposite forces which identify freedom with license. There are the adjusted people who merely consume and are scant alive, and who believe that only if we were ruled by law and order, we could avoid anarchy and licentiousness. And then there are many of the young who believe that freedom means absence of tradition, absence of structure, absence of plan: what is desirable is unstructured, spontaneous action. They often believe that 'the old ideas' and values are of little or no use today, that to know tradition, not to speak of accepting some of it, is in itself an obstacle to freedom. Their error lies in their confusing structure with order. I believe that the word structure applies to living processes, and that the word order applies to mechanical changes.

All life--and all inorganic matter too--implies structure, that is, system. Where structure is destroyed, pathology and death set in. Hence where there is a process of life there must necessarily be structure.

But such structure is radically different from mechanical order. It is through order that life is cut down to fit the demands of those who are afraid of life and are attracted to death. (SUMMERHILL: FOR AND AGAINST, NY: Hart Publishing Co., 1970, pp. 225, 262-263.)

The only addition I would like to make ~~to~~ Fromm's catalog is the point that the necrophile also lacks wit: he takes everything -- except perhaps the misfortunes of others -- most seriously, as befits his Manichaean paranoia. He lacks, in a word, a healthy sense of humor. Which brings me to my second "basic," the ability to use the right hemisphere of the brain as well as the left. The ability in other words to balance the "rational," linear, sequential, word-oriented left-hemisphere with the potential or the right hemisphere, metaphoric, non-linear, intuitive, and virtually wordless. From the right hemisphere comes the power or perspective and creativity -- the preference for open-endedness and original and varied solutions to our endless problems, a different kind of thinking from the single-track syllogisms of the left hemisphere. School ignores half of the human brain in its depressing litany of useless taxonomies.

The ability to laugh is, perhaps, only second to the ability to sleep as an emotional restorative. Man is the only animal, for all I know, with the potential for a sense of humor. A sense of humor then is a basic characteristic only of human beings. Where do we provide for the development of this basic?

Our number one health problem is mental illness. More Americans suffer from this than from all other illnesses combined. One of the first symptoms of mental illness

is the loss of a sense of humor and the loss of the ability to laugh-- to laugh at oneself in particular and at the human condition in general. This ability is increasingly rare among us. There is little in the environment that seems conducive to its development or cultivation.

Dr. Harold M. Visotsky, chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at Northwestern University, in a recent interview said that emotional depression is growing by epidemic proportions which might contribute to political demagoguery. The apathy and concurrent depression of today's youth not only affects a future generation but also those of older and younger ages, he added. It was stated that prior to Hitler's rise to power the German people experienced financial as well as emotional depression.

Let's not forget that suicide is the second most common cause of death among our youth. We don't have any "studies that show" how well the mentally ill score on reading tests or on SATs, but I'd bet they'd score as well as most elected politicians or employees of the USOE for that matter.

The cultivation and maintenance of a sense of humor, I am saying, may just be the most important humanistic objective to work toward-- personally and professionally. Why not add the burden of sanity to our already heavy load? It would be a funny thing to do. I am quite serious about this, which reminds me that one of the distinctions most of us seem unable to make is that between seriousness and solemnity. Humor is always serious, while solemnity fulfills the function of obscuring the ludicrous. In "The Sense in Humor" Harvey Mindess, a practicing psychologist and a professor at UCLA, put it this way:

> The extent to which our sense of humor can help us to maintain our sanity is the extent to which it moves beyond jokes, beyond wit, beyond laughter itself. It must constitute a frame of mind, a point of view, a deep-going, far-reaching attitude to life.
>
> A cluster of qualities characterizes this peculiar frame of mind: flexibility, in this case an individual's willingness to examine every side of every issue and every side of every side; spontaneity, his ability to leap from one mood or mode of thought to another; unconventionality, his freedom from the values of his time, his place, and his profession; shrewdness, his refusal to believe that anyone--least of all himself--is what he seems to be; playfulness, his grasp of life as a game, a tragicomic game that nobody wins but that does not have to be won to be enjoyed; and humility, that elusive quality. . .A man who can shrug off the insufficiency of his ultimate wisdom, the meaninglessness of his profoundest thoughts, is a man in touch with the very soul of humor.
>
> Each of these six qualities plays its part in the drama of the humorous outlook. The starring role, however, is reserved for another characteristic. We may call it the enjoyment of the ironies that permeate our lives. In order to command a therapeutic sense of humor, we must become acutely aware of the anomalies that run through all human affairs. We must come to know, not theoretically but practically, that the happiest relationships are larded with suffering, that the greatest accomplishments are anticlimactic, that rational acts are motivated by irrational drives, that psychotic thinking makes excellent sense. We must know that assertiveness is the mask of fearfulness, that humility is a kind of pride, that love is a euphemism for lust, that truth is the pawn of fashion, that we cherish our misery, and that we all are more irrational than we acknowledge. (SATURDAY REVIEW, August 21, 1971, p. 10.)

Helping students to come to these kinds of understandings and developing this basic human ability will require us to act as if the human brain includes a right hemisphere as well as a left. Doesn't that seem rather basic? Acting as if the whole brain needs to be acknowledged rather than only one half? Perhaps if we managed to

include this basic we would not be a society that depends so heavily on drugs, both licit and illicit, to get through the day and night. At the present time, if all of the Librium, Valium, Ritalin, and booze, to say nothing of pot and hard drugs, were suddenly denied to our citizenry (yes, the one that pays taxes, votes, and wants to get back to basics) our society would come to a screeching halt! Yes, it would just stop; not as a result of the actions of the enemy that the Pentagon fears most, but as a result of our own inability to make it without some kind of chemical help. Pogo was frighteningly right when he said, "We has met the enemy and he is us."

We need to use both sides of the brain to detect crap and to be able to laugh at it when we do rather than to strain ourselves into an anxious paranoia that requires us to drug ourselves into a feeling of "security" and the illusion of euphoria. That's basic, and there is no way to get "back" to it -- that kind of realization of our human potential is still out in front of us and we'll never get to it by moving backwards.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"Students should be taught American justice is based on the concept of God, the county school superintendent said Saturday at a meeting of the Congress for God and Country.

'When Jefferson wrote that men are endowed by their creator with inalienable rights, he was identifying God as the source of all liberty--and not government,' Richard Harris told the organization at the American Legion Hall, 364 N. Seventh Ave.

Because this is the real moral justification for our laws, the concept of God and subsequent ethical implications should be taught in the country's schools, Harris said.

The school superintendent said government usurps the divine role when it attempts to 'make men equal.'

'The idea seems to be gaining popularity that if an individual through one circumstance or another does not get what someone in government believes to be his fair share, . . .the government will rectify the situation,' Harris said.

. . .

Harris also advocated a return to the basics in Arizona schools, noting that examinations, report cards and grades are essential for students to learn their own strengths and limitations." ("Concept of God Should Be Taught, School Chief Says," ARIZONA REPUBLIC, October 26, 1975, p. B-9)

"Schools are training youths for jobs in an industrial society that won't exist in the future, author Alvin Toffler told a group of educators here Saturday.

The futurist said schools still are emphasizing obedience, rote and punctuality--characteristics designed 'to produce people who would go into blue-collar work.'

But the future will be radically different because of the rapid rate of change and technology and the impact those changes have on society, producing increasing fragmentation and diversity, he added." (Athea L. Hardt, "'Future Shock' Author Says Schools Train for Obsolete Jobs," ARIZONA REPUBLIC, March 10, 1974, p. A-24)

One of the most widely known figures in open education, Lillian Weber, a professor at City College and the moving force behind last weekend's conference, believes that 'open education is taking a bad rap in a changing social climate.'

These kids who are not achieving now in high schools and colleges never even had open education, and at that time it was a drop in the bucket. We're not the ones producing what people are complaining about.'" (Gene I. Maeroff, "Liberals Defend Open Classes Against Back-to-Basic Forces," NY TIMES, April 20, 1975, p. 40)

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS SURVEY/ANALYSIS

Carroll G. Anderson, Williams Air Force Base

INTRODUCTION

In conjunction with an English-Education course at ASU and a personal interest in English and Continuing Education, I recently conducted an informal survey of 200 fellow workers at Williams AFB, Arizona. Survey subjects included as broad a cross-section of the base population as I could get--military personnel, civilian employees of the Air Force, and adult dependents of both, limited only to those beyond high school age and in the labor force. I chose Williams because I work there, the people are the largest reasonably homogeneous group accessible to me, I was able to maintain some degree of situational control, and because I felt the subjects represented a fresh viewpoint, an untapped source of information. In this article I intend to examine the survey and results in light of several questions being asked of, and by, the educational community--questions concerning the efficacy and validity of English programs past and present and the "back to the basics" issue as it could (or should?) affect future efforts. Hopefully, data gathered will provide some answers, or insight at least, into attitudes and reading and writing practices of adults no longer in school.

RATIONALE FOR SURVEY

The attitudes of adults concerning communication skills and English education should interest English teachers--if for no other reason than to check their effect on the finished product. Most adults have had some training in reading and writing and all are faced with the opportunity, if not the necessity, to practice those skills. They have opinions on Education (systems, values, and practices) and their opinions are important for many reasons, not the least of which should be the teacher's concern for what kind of job is being done and what it is worth. The survey I conducted was designed to draw-out the attitudes of working adults, to find out how they feel about various facets of "non-verbal communication." I sought to learn how they characterized their ability to read and write, what directions their experiences in English education had taken, and what value they placed on them. At the same time I thought their feelings about current trends might prove enlightening. As balm for a personal itch I included a question or two which I hoped would indicate their interest in a program of Continuing Education. In a more tangible vein I asked for replies to questions on general reading and writing practices, the amount and frequency of each done on the job and off. The amount of reading and writing done by adults not necessarily involved in occupations which require or are characterized by the use of these skills and the amount done in personal business and for pleasure or personal information might be valuable for the teacher curious about the use to which the skills and interests developed are put.

Certain concepts have become apparent as I get deeper into English education. These concepts seem to go with the territory, seem to be pervasive, and seem to be valid, to a certain extent. There is, I've noticed, a general consensus that the public is doing very little reading, at least in relation to the amount English teachers believe should be done. At the same time there is an increasing cultural emphasis on other media, primarily television, and a growing dependence on all manner of electronic information storage and dissemination devices--the non-written media are taking over reading and writing jobs, however routine or superficial. Letter writing is becoming obsolete; why write when the message can be relayed faster and more dependably by telephone? Through information gathered in this survey perhaps the validity of these ideas can be tested.

If the theory that fewer adults are reading and writing is valid then perhaps the quality, or emphasis, of English programs is partly to blame. National media

attention has focused lately on the lack of communication skills among students graduating from high school. Also a recently circulated news story declared some 20% of American adults functionally illiterate, based on a Federally funded survey conducted by the University of Texas, among others. These revelations, and what seems to be a growing dissatisfaction with the Education system nationwide, have added fuel to the fires of a "back to the basics" movement. Just how widespread the movement, which calls for a realignment of educational priorities, really depends on who is talking. I included questions on the survey designed to shed some light on this question--what the survey subjects feel should be the emphasis of future English education programs.

CHARACTER OF SURVEY/SAMPLING

As important as the data gathered in any survey is, the information means nothing if the way it was gathered is unreliable. Therefore, the survey discussed here must be carefully examined for characteristics which might effect the outcome. To begin with, the survey was informal and unscientific. There was no attempt to influence answers or choose subjects who would give specific answers. On the contrary, the questions and responses were as objective and unbiased as possible and subjects were chosen as randomly as was practical. But the survey was a personal and small-scale effort and certainly nothing on which to base any earthshaking pronouncements or decisions.

The character of the survey itself may or may not diminish its validity. It was written and conducted without benefit of formal training or prior experience. It represents my maiden effort and was done to satisfy personal curiosity. At the same time the task was approached with an eye toward avoiding self-fulling prophecy. No claims are made about the validity of the data--there'd be no way to verify such a claim if made.

The subjects of a survey are also important in determining the validity of data and, in terms of this effort, might be a vital factor. On the surface, the people queried share only their place of employment. The sampling was limited to 200 because it had to be set somewhere and the figure seemed small enough to be manageable yet large enough to be representative. Subjects were grouped according to sex and age. Age groups were: Under 20, then ten year increments to 60, and over 60. No attempt was made to limit the sample according to economic status, occupation, or educational background. Individual interpretation of questions was encouraged and space provided for alternative responses if none of those provided seemed appropriate.

Because the survey was conducted on an Air Force base an imbalance exists in numbers grouped by sex--155 males and only 45 females. While the attempt is being made, the military has yet to achieve sexual parity. The imbalance results in a definite skewing of the sampling but it's possible the groups can be considered separately. While the sex grouping was definitely skewed, the age categories seemed well balanced though there is a bulge in the 20-29 group. This, too, is understandable in view of the survey location: military personnel on the base are predominately in that age bracket. In terms of occupational, economic, and educational background, the group is as heterogeneous as any predominately middle class sampling. Occupations involved are fairly evenly divided between blue and white collar: aircraft mechanics and allied trades, office workers, and first line supervisors. Economic backgrounds involve a similar spread--from lower ranking military personnel through the NCO grades and comparable civilian pay grades represented. This sampling falls roughly between $6,000 and $15,000 a year. Educational backgrounds are also diverse; a few subjects with only grade school education, some with college degrees. The majority are high school graduates, a requirement for Air Force members, and many have completed some college work. The survey subjects, overall, are a seemingly typical middle class working group, hopefully representative of the people supporting and sending children to our schools.

ERIC

Despite the obvious skewing in the sampling and the possible drawbacks of a homemade survey, I feel the information gathered is potentially worthwhile and the subjects surveyed have something important to say. I had no way of knowing how they felt about the things I wanted to know unless I asked.

SURVEY AND DATA TABLE

Following is a reproduction of the survey questionnaire form as it was presented to subjects.

Non-Verbal Communication Skills: Survey and Self-Analysis

"Non-verbal communication skills" is a fancy way of saying "the ability to read and write." Through this survey I hope to learn how each of you feels about your own ability to read and write. There is no need for you to reveal any personal information; your opinions are all I am interested in at this time. The information I collect in this survey will help me, as background material, in a study of the methods and impact of English courses.

For each of the questions asked please choose the answer that best describes your situation or feelings. If none of the choices is satisfactory, give your own answer in the space provided.

____1. In my job I have to do. . .
 a. very little, if any, writing.
 b. some writing, but not very often.
 c. some writing on a regular basis.
 d. a lot of writing all the time.
 e. ____________________

____2. I write personal letters and use written correspondence in my own affairs. . .
 a. all the time.
 b. sometimes, but not very often.
 c. only a few times a year.
 d. seldom, if ever.
 e. ____________________

____3. In my job I have to do . . .
 a. very little, if any, reading.
 b. some reading, but not very often.
 c. some reading on a regular basis.
 d. a lot of reading all the time.
 e. ____________________

____4. I read for pleasure or information . . .
 a. every chance I get.
 b. if there's nothing else to do.
 c. when I can't avoid it.
 d. seldom, if ever.
 e. ____________________

____5. For news and information I depend mainly on . . .
 a. rumors and gossip.
 b. the radio.
 c. television.
 d. books, magazines, and newspapers.
 e. ____________________

____6. I feel my ability to express myself clearly in writing is. . .
 a. perfectly adequate.
 b. no better, or worse, than anyone else.
 c. satisfactory, but could use some help.
 d. very limited.
 e. ____________________

____7. I feel my ability to understand what I read is . . .
 a. perfectly adequate.

b. no better, or worse, than anybody else.
c. satisfactory, but could use some help.
d. very limited.
e. ____________________

____8. English classes, when I attended school. . .
a. emphasized grammar and polishing fundamental communication skills.
b. emphasized composition and developing writing techniques.
c. emphasized reading and appreciation of literary works.
d. presented a well balanced selection of grammar, composition and literature.
e. ____________________

____9. I feel the English classes I attended were. . .
a. of little or no value to me.
b. of some value, while I remembered what was taught.
c. easy to remember but of little practical value.
d. of great and lasting value.
e. ____________________

____10. I think English classes in today's schools should . . .
a. emphasize basics; vocabulary and communication skills.
b. require students to memorize grammar rules and learn phonics.
c. be dropped as a requirement because no one reads or writes anymore.
d. teach appreciation of great literature.
e. ____________________

____11. I think classes in improving communication skills for adults no longer in school. . .
a. would be of great help to me.
b. would be a profitable way to spend some of my spare time.
c. probably wouldn't be of much help to me.
d. would be a complete waste of time.
e. ____________________

____12. In today's world of television and pre-printed forms. . .
a. the ability to read and write well is no longer necessary.
b. a person could probably get along all right being unable to read and write.
c. well developed communication skills are important.
d. an appreciation of literature and an ability to write well are still vital in the well-rounded person.
e. ____________________

Please check the appropriate space in the following categories:

Sex: Male____
Female____

Age: Under 20 ____ 20-29 ____ 30-39 ____ 40-49 ____ 50-59 ____ Over 60 ____

The only instructions given survey subjects, other than those printed on the questionnaire, were that they could select more than one response per question if applicable and to interpret questions and responses in terms of their own particular situation.

On the data table that follows are enumerated subjects' responses in <u>percentages</u>, divided into age and sex groups. Across the top are listed the age groups. Next are lines containing the number of males and females and the total subjects for each age. The main portion of the table is divided into twelve boxes, one for each of the survey questions. The box for each question is divided into five horizontal columns, one for each response, and nine vertical columns. The first two of these columns contain the number of the question and the letters designating response choices. The first column to the right contains the total percentage of subjects who chose each response. The remaining six vertical columns contain the percentage of subjects by age group who selected that item. Each box, formed by the intersection of horizontal and vertical columns, contains two numbers: the top reflecting the percentage of males, the lower figure percentage of females. Percentage figures have been rounded off.

#		%	-20	20/29	30/39	40/49	50/59	60+
AGE			-20	20/29	30/39	40/49	50/59	60+
Male			4	55	39	30	22	5
Female			6	16	7	10	4	2
Total			10	71	46	40	26	7
#		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1	a	21.5	25 50	25 19	15 14	27 10	18 --	60 --
	b	26.5	25 --	35 25	15 43	37 33	14 50	20 --
	c	40.0	50 33	31 44	67 14	23 33	55 25	-- 100
	d	11.5	-- 17	7 13	8 29	7 33	18 25	20 --
	e	0.0	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --
2	a	23.5	75 68	16 50	18 29	10 10	18 50	60 50
	b	43.5	25 33	53 38	54 43	40 40	36 25	-- 20
	c	15.0	-- --	11 6	10 14	27 33	23 25	20 --
	d	15.5	-- --	20 6	5 14	20 10	27 --	20 --
	e	0.0	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --
3	a	15.5	25 33	18 19	5 --	7 10	14 25	20 --
	b	27.5	25 33	27 31	23 14	30 20	18 --	20 --
	c	41.0	50 --	40 38	59 71	43 20	41 --	20 --
	d	19.0	-- 33	13 13	13 14	10 50	32 50	40 100
	e	.5	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- 25	-- --
4	a	65.0	25 83	47 81	69 86	60 80	86 50	80 50
	b	23.5	25 --	38 13	21 14	30 20	5 --	20 50
	c	4.5	25 17	4 --	5 --	7 --	-- 25	-- --
	d	7.5	25 --	7 6	8 --	10 --	9 25	-- --
	e	.5	-- --	2 --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --
5	a	8.5	50 --	7 6	5 --	10 10	14 --	20 --
	b	25.0	-- 17	24 31	31 14	27 33	18 50	20 --
	c	58.5	50 67	58 25	59 43	73 60	55 100	20 100
	d	58.5	-- 33	47 69	64 57	63 100	68 50	80 50
	e	0.0	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --

#		%	-20	20/29	30/39	40/49	50/59	60+
AGE			-20	20/29	30/39	40/49	50/59	60+
Male			4	55	39	30	22	5
Female			6	16	7	10	4	2
Total			10	71	46	40	26	7
#		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
6	a	22.5	25 33	15 38	27 14	20 20	32 50	20 50
	b	15.0	25 --	11 6	26 29	7 20	18 25	20 --
	c	54.5	50 67	62 44	39 57	73 40	55 25	40 50
	d	7.5	-- --	11 13	5 --	10 10	-- --	20 --
	e	.5	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- 10	-- --	-- --
7	a	34.5	75 33	20 25	41 29	37 40	50 50	40 50
	b	21.5	25 17	22 31	15 29	23 10	27 50	-- --
	c	41.0	-- 33	53 44	44 43	40 40	18 --	60 50
	d	1.5	-- --	4 --	-- --	-- --	5 --	-- --
	e	.5	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- 10	-- --	-- --
8	a	24.0	-- 33	22 19	36 43	20 30	18 --	20 --
	b	11.0	50 17	5 25	10 14	3 10	18 25	-- --
	c	9.5	-- --	9 --	3 14	17 --	18 --	40 50
	d	56.0	50 50	58 56	56 57	57 60	54 50	40 50
	e	1.5	-- --	2 --	-- --	-- --	5 25	-- --
9	a	7.0	-- 17	9 13	3 29	10 --	-- --	-- --
	b	40.0	25 33	49 38	41 29	40 40	36 25	40 --
	c	15.0	-- 17	16 13	23 --	10 10	9 --	-- 100
	d	38.5	75 33	22 38	39 43	37 50	56 75	60 --
	e	1.0	-- --	-- --	3 --	3 --	-- --	-- --
10	a	81.5	75 100	60 100	92 86	80 90	64 75	80 50
	b	16.5	25 --	11 13	13 14	17 10	41 25	20 50
	c	2.5	-- --	7 --	-- --	3 --	-- --	-- --
	d	9.5	-- 50	11 6	10 14	3 10	9 --	-- --
	e	2.5	-- --	6 --	3 --	-- --	5 --	-- --

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

AGE			-20	20/29	30/39	40/49	50/59	60+
Male			4	55	39	30	22	5
Female			6	16	7	10	4	2
Total			10	71	46	40	26	7
#		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
11	a	46.0	-- 17	51 31	59 71	50 40	45 --	20 --
	b	35.0	75 67	29 50	28 .14	30 50	32 50	40 100
	c	14.0	25 --	9 19	10 --	17 10	23 50	40 --
	d	1.0	-- --	2 --	3 --	-- --	-- --	-- --
	e	1.5	-- 17	2 --	3 --	-- --	-- --	-- --

AGE			-20	20/29	30/39	40/49	50/59	60+
Male			4	55	39	30	22	5
Female			6	16	7	10	4	2
Total			10	71	46	40	26	7
#		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
12	a	3.5	-- --	5 --	3 --	3 --	5 --	20 --
	b	4.0	25 --	4 13	5 --	3 --	-- --	-- --
	c	47.5	25 33	55 50	51 71	30 40	55 75	-- 50
	d	46.0	50 50	36 56	49 29	63 70	45 25	80 50
	e	1.0	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- 10	-- --	-- 50

IMPLICATIONS OF SURVEY

Instead of an item by item analysis of survey questions and responses, I want to concentrate on an overall interpretation of the data in terms of original objectives. This interpretation is personal, represents my reactions to the project, and may or may not be valid to others. In any case all raw data has been included and those with a better grasp of numbers or a better foundation in statistics may reach some very different conclusions.

As adults supporting and sending their children to our schools, the attitudes of survey subjects may eventually manifest themselves, in some way, in the educational system, and educators should be aware of them. From the outset it has been my hope these attitudes might be representative of most working class adults, or at least provide some hints on which to base educational guesses. Some of the attitudes revealed were predictable, some not--all combined to present a gratifying positive picture of the public's feelings toward English-related subjects and programs.

Based on responses from the survey, subjects seem to have ambivalent feelings about their ability to understand what they read and to communicate effectively in writing. On one hand, a majority of subjects do at least some reading and writing on the job and even more off. At the same time they are not all positive about their skill in these tasks. Over half the subjects admitted they feel somewhat inadequate when trying to express themselves in writing, and almost half feel the same way about their reading comprehension. Nearly 80% characterized their education in English as valuable, but over half of those said they have forgotten much of what was taught. Over 90% indicate a belief the skills taught in English classes are still important, and a well-rounded person must be proficient in them. It seems clear survey subjects consider communication skills a valuable and relevant part of education still useful in the business of everyday living.

A majority of those surveyed stated their English education presented a well balanced program of grammar, composition, and literature; nearly a quarter said grammar and communication skills were emphasized. While over three-quarters claimed that at least part of their education emphasized fundamentals, almost all agreed that is what should be emphasized in future programs. These developments, coupled with an apparent lack of faith in their own ability to communicate as well as they feel they should, seem to point toward an attitude on the part of survey subjects that a realignment of priorities and/or emphases in English education is necessary. More than three-fourths of those queried responded favorably on questions concerning interest in and the value of a program in Continuing Education. They said such a program would be of great value to them or a profitable way to spend some of their spare time. This information seems to confirm that subjects consider communication skills important and are less than satisfied with their performance in this area.

At Williams Air Force base, airmen in the lower grades and civilian employees do most of the work while supervision is handled primarily by NCOs and tenured civilians. Due to the nature of the system this creates a curious age/job distribution pattern: workers are in the under 20 and 20-29 age groups or in the 40-49 to over 60 brackets while supervisors fall mainly in the 30-39 and 50-59 categories. By percentage, those in age brackets 30-39 and 50-59 claim they are required to do more reading and writing and indicate this is routine. Also significant is the fact 40-50% of the under 20 and 20-29 groups have to read and write and that military personnel in those groups are more likely to be still in training than their older counterparts. These patterns, of course, apply only at Williams but a correlation may be found, in terms of the amount of reading and writing done by those in supervisory positions compared to those in working jobs elsewhere.

One of the biggest surprises of the survey was the revelation that almost 90% of those surveyed claim they read for pleasure or personal information every chance they get (65%) or when they have nothing else to do (23.5%). These figures, when compared to those which indicate a significant percentage of subjects claimed to be less than satisfied with their ability, are somewhat contradictory. The high percentage is gratifying, though, for the work of some English teachers clearly is not a waste of time. Another interesting fact is that these practices are reflected throughout the sampling--no age group does significantly more reading than any other. There is considerable difference, however, in the percentage of women reading than men.

Writing personal letters or using written correspondence in personal business is not done as regularly or by as high a percentage of subjects as is reading. GIs, both male and female, do more writing than those in older age groups, probably best explained by the fact they are more likely to be away from home and family. Women also do slightly more writing than men. Whether or not the inference can be drawn that women do more letter writing than men is conjectural.

One objective was to verify apparently widespread beliefs about the status of communication skills among working adults, whether adults read and write anymore, how much influence alternative media (primarily TV) exert on reading and writing practices, whether English programs meet the needs of students, and what is the feeling about the "back-to-the-basics" issue.

If there is concern that today's adults do less reading and writing than they should or their counterparts in the past did, a majority of these subjects claim they do read and write. This claim, of course, is based on their interpretations of their own practices.

The revelation that exactly the same percentage of survey subjects depend on written media for news and information as on television is surprising, as much so as the high percentage who read for pleasure every chance they get. Together these figures seem to indicate the tube hasn't had quite as much negative effect on reading as some people seem to think. No matter how much actual reading takes place, the data support the notion that these subjects consider the practice important.

The ambivalence mentioned earlier between stated reading and writing practices and the way subjects characterize their ability seems to indicate a lack of motivation for using or polishing these skills. Whereas opportunities to read are no farther away than the Cheerios box on the breakfast table, very little immediate opportunity to write exists for most adults, and too many of the chances they do get are limited to filling out questionnaires and application blanks. The precious little reason to do any writing seems an effective way of destroying whatever skills adults might have developed in school. There is no evidence in survey data to reflect any particular

inefficient methods in English classes during the subjects' educations, on the contrary, the high regard for the knowledge and the assessments made of their abilities seem to show a generally good job was done by English teachers.

I had hoped to establish a consensus with regard to the "back-to-the-basics" issue. What I got was an almost unanimous opinion that back-to-the-basics is the only way to go. Over 80% of the sample agreed future English programs should emphasize basics; 16.5% said students should be made to memorize grammar rules and learn phonics. When combined with negative assessments of their own reading and writing ability and the inability to recall what was learned in English classes, the support for back-to-the-basics seems the obvious choice of adults hoping their children will fare better than they did.

Recent reports claim 20% of American adults are functionally illiterate. I can only say the percentage at Willimas AFB is not that high; only 7.5% of the subjects claimed to be very limited in their ability to write as well as they think they should. Less than 2% cannot read as well as they feel they need to. The high percentage of subjects claiming to read widely also belies such reports. Whatever the case, this survey can only reflect those subjects surveyed. Survey data does not reflect a high percentage of illiteracy among adults, either those long out of school or those in younger age brackets who've recently completed their education. It does, however, indicate that subjects are aware of these reports, have heard that the product of today's schools may not be as well prepared in communication skills as they should be, and think something should be done to alleviate the situation. The subjects seem to be quite sophisticated in terms of English education--what they should know, what they can do, and what should be emphasized in future programs. This sophistication may or may not be representative of the public as a whole. The view presented by this survey is positive--subjects use communication skills, perhaps not as well or as often as they'd like, but they value those skills. They feel that the emphasis of current programs may have strayed from its proper path, but the things taught are important and continue to be valuable. English education is here to stay and doing a pretty good job.

- - - - - - - - - -

SHOPTALK:

"Contrary to your conclusion regarding the writing skills of youth today (Nov. 25 editorial) maybe the decline in our adolescents' writing skills is indicative of their entrance into a society of expanding technology and growing impersonality. Maybe this has been going on for a while.
Who needs to write today? Today's job seeker must be able to fill out standardized job applications, take multiple-choice exams and memorize his or her Social Security number. The development of alternative means of communication has been rapid--the telephone, radio, cinema, TV, tape recorder, computer are all commonplace. In our daily scribblings, writing sentences is rare, writing paragraphs is rarer.
Most crucial in the decline of writing is the starvation of personal expression. The many technological stimuli for information, recreation and survival bombard and confuse us. A teacher of young kids can tell you that a child learns to read and write best when his or her basic personal needs are satisfied. Children write when they feel more secure about themselves and their surroundings.
How can the schools be anything but anachronistic in trying to develop writing skills which increasingly are unnecessary in our society? If writing as a form of individual expression and social communication is to survive, society must lessen its obsession with mass efficiency and methodology and embrace the human needs. (Letter to the editor, "Who Needs to Write in TV, Computer Age?" DENVER POST, December 7, 1975, p. 27)