

Significant Books

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Learning How To Learn, An American Approach to Montessori. *Nancy McCormick Rambusch.* Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1962, 180 p. \$4.50

A half century ago there was a flurry of excitement in the United States about the Montessori Method of teaching young children as developed in Rome by a physician of that name, Dr. Maria Montessori. The excitement resulted from reports that children born with potentials for unfolding development could educate themselves if given the liberty to work freely in a prepared environment where special self-correcting equipment was provided and certain ground rules were demonstrated and enforced by an adult known, not as a teacher, but as a directress. It was thought that self education in early years would set a pattern of self control and self direction for life. But the more immediate satisfaction to American minds lay in the report that very young children, three, four and five years of age, in Montessori schools "exploded into reading and writing" and made remarkable progress in arithmetic.

Now, in 1962 comes this book, *Learning How To Learn, An American Approach to Montessori*, by Nancy McCormick Rambusch, founder and headmistress of the Whitby School in Greenwich, Connecticut and president of the American Montessori Society. She says, "If, as Philip Combs of the Ford Foundation has remarked, it takes fifty years for

an idea to get into the classroom, then a re-evaluation of Montessori is on schedule."

The Montessori idea was not overlooked by American educators through inertia, however. Critical appraisals of the system were made, experimental centers were established, American educators went to Rome to investigate at first hand, Madam Montessori came to the United States for lectures, and a considerable amount of literature on the subject was published.

It is apparent that this system of education had a popular appeal, but that after serious study it was rejected in favor of other more promising developments in American education. Kindergartens were already established in the schools and there followed, in the 1920's, the introduction of nursery schools for children below kindergarten age. Institutes for research in child development were established all across the United States and pioneer thinkers brought about marked changes in kindergartens and primary grades in the light of the newer knowledge of child growth and development.

It is when the reader comes to Part II of Mrs. Rambusch's book, dealing with the "Prepared Environment," which describes the materials and methods in a Montessori school for children three to six, that the reasons for rejection by American educators will become appar-

ent. Many may wish to start reading with this section. Only a glimpse of it can be given here but enough of a sample is necessary to illustrate some of the negative generalizations of the critics.

The materials were devised by Dr. Montessori to give children exercises in teaching themselves, thus preparing them for a life of learning, not single experiences in learning. Prominent among these are sensorial materials which children manipulate: fitting insets into proper spaces, arranging sequences according to size, etc. Thus they have structured perceptual experiences with length, breadth, color, texture, weight, and also solid and plane geometric shapes. A child is free to work with any of these materials after he has become capable of dealing with them through presentation by the teacher or through watching another child work with them.

Vocabulary lessons given by the teacher accompany these exercises. This is a set procedure known as "the three period lesson." As an example in teaching colors: (a) the teacher shows the colors and names them; (b) the child hands specific color cards to the teacher on request; and (c) the child names the colors in response to the teacher's query, "Which is this?"

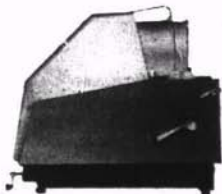
Even preparation for learning to write and read consists of a series of manipulation exercises rather than the thoughtful processes which they must become. The child trains his hand to use a pencil by tracing around insets and around spaces where the insets have been and then he fills the form he has drawn with light pencil strokes. He learns the forms of the alphabet by tracing letters made of sandpaper and pasted on cards. The teacher shows him how to do this and as he traces with his fingertips she gives him the sounds of the letters explored.

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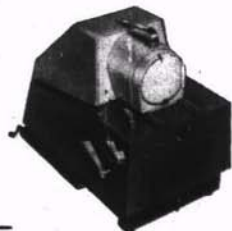
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This avowedly brief sample of the prepared environment illustrates the basis for the first and perhaps most emphatic negative criticism by American educators to the effect that the system is limited. It is limited in variety, limited to exact and precise activities, formal in character and remote from social interest and connection. It is also said that overemphasis on perceptual learning to the denial of experiences which develop concepts and meanings is not natural to young children who are avidly questioning, "Why?" and "What for?" The method is also criticized for its apparent dependence on the outmoded theory of mental discipline and the naive trust in a very generous transfer of training to functional behavior where no meaningful connection exists.

The most vivid picture of the Montessori Method is that which describes the work with the younger children as com-

mented upon above, yet the reader will be interested in exploring with Mrs. Rambusch the section which she calls "The Hope," in which she describes programming for children of six years and older and includes a brief chapter on the organization of the "New School." She describes the exciting learning which awaits the child about the world of affairs, the world of space exploration, after he has mastered the first lessons of perceptual learning and progressively evolves into conceptual learning. She continues her emphasis on self education and notes that when a child can read by the age of six he has new horizons open to him in the world of books and with these he can teach himself and proceed at his own rate.

Serious readers will find Mrs. Rambusch's book thought provoking, especially Part I, "The Child, Insights and Corollaries." In this part she quotes from



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published utterances of eminent scholars in the fields of human development and behavior. After each quote she gives a summary of what Montessori thinks along the same line.

The outcome of each individual reader's reflection will depend upon his personal appraisal. It would seem unlikely, however, that school systems would be prompted to purchase quantities of the Montessori didactic materials nor that teachers and parents would attempt to emulate the method. Indeed Mrs. Rambusch cautions against the latter procedure since the method demands special teacher training. This book stimulates thinking but it is in no sense a manual for teachers, parents or school administrators.

—Reviewed by WINIFRED E. BAIN, 50 Follen Street, Cambridge 38, Massachusetts.

The Young Citizens: The Story of The Encampment for Citizenship. Algernon D. Black. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1962. 416 p.

Today American youths and young adults face a world of enormous complexity, deep problems, and fateful opportunity. They have basic concerns about the world they are inheriting, and a great many of them—more than common surface apathy might suggest—hope to play a part in shaping its destiny. In an absorbing and brilliant book, *The Young Citizens*, Algernon D. Black tells the story of a highly significant, pioneering effort to assist young adults in matching their concern with informed understanding and a capacity for civic action in the best American tradition.

The story that Dr. Black tells is that of the Encampment for Citizenship, one of the most significant experiments in young

adult civic education in America during the past two decades. The Encampment, as many readers of *Educational Leadership* know, is a summer workshop program conducted for youth in the 17-23 year age range. It leads youths from many walks of life to deal directly and practically with important issues of their time; it involves them in a depth study of such issues; it provides six weeks of summer field study of such issues in action; and it provides a remarkable experience of learning democracy by living it. This last is perhaps the most important feature of the Encampment for Citizenship, described in *The Young Citizens*. In the summer Encampments, youths and young adults from schools, colleges, farms, industries and other locations come together to live and work in a cultural setting which is uniquely democratic. The important results of this experience on the attitudes and behavior of young people have been documented thoroughly by independent research conducted by the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University.

Thus the story of the Encampments for Citizenship told in *The Young Citizens* is an absorbing and interesting one for all American educators concerned with ways and means of educating for democracy. In a sense, the Encampment is both an analogue and precursor of the Peace Corps; at the same time, it is analogous to many things that we in schools have attempted to do in providing learning experiences in democracy for young people.

No one could be better prepared than Algernon D. Black to tell the fascinating story of the conception, establishment and development of the Encampment for Citizenship. Algernon Black has been working with young people for four decades. After graduation from Harvard, he

was a social worker and was associated with work camps that presaged the Encampment for Citizenship. In 1956 Dr. Black founded the first Encampment. The story of how this vital new idea for summer experiences took hold is recounted in *The Young Citizens*.

Today the Encampment is established and thoroughly tested in New York, Berkeley, and Puerto Rico. It could provide the United States with a young model for helping engage our young citizens in mastering the major social, economic and political issues which our nation now encounters. As Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt has said, "The Encampment for Citizenship is one of the best ways that I have seen to bring before young people in a vital and interesting way the dynamism of democracy."

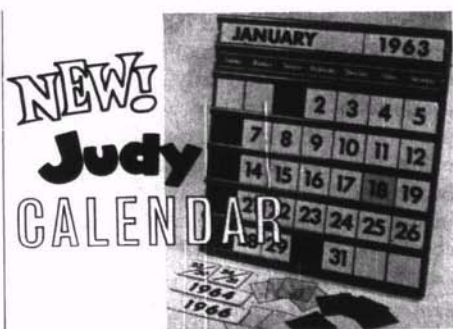
The Young Citizens deserves to be read widely by all Americans, and especially by those who have a commitment to prepare the next generation of American adults for the heavy responsibilities they must carry.

—Reviewed by FRANKLIN PATTERSON,
Lincoln Filene Professor of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts.

Elementary Statistics. Second Edition.


Henry E. Garrett. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1962. 178 p.

This book has been written to provide an introduction to statistical methods for students of psychology and the social sciences. The arrangement of the material for presentation is generally well done. The reader is given a brief discussion of measurement, is introduced to frequency distributions, and then is led to a consideration of measures of central tendency and variability. At this point the author discusses percentiles and percentile ranks, following this by



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a discussion of the normal curve and its use as a probability distribution. Next the reader is given a discussion of correlation and its applications to reliability and validity of tests. The latter part of the book introduces statistical inference (the t-test, the chi-square test, and simple randomized design analysis of variance). A chapter on scaling test scores (the best-written chapter in the book) is unaccountably placed in the midst of the chapters dealing with inference; otherwise the arrangement of topics is well managed.

The major emphasis in this text is on the development of skills for the computation of certain statistics. Little time is devoted to the exploration of the conceptual foundations of statistics and the book should not be used unless these understandings are present or unless they are developed concurrently by the instructor.

This book contains a very brief treatment (178 pp.) of a great many complicated topics. As a ready reference for those who are familiar with statistical procedures the book has considerable value. As a teaching outline that could be expanded and enlarged by a sensitive instructor, the book will undoubtedly see considerable use.

—Reviewed by R. H. KERCE, Associate Professor of Mathematics, David Lipscomb College, Nashville, Tennessee; and DAVID TURNEY, Associate Professor of Education, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee.

Measurement and Evaluation in the Modern School. J. Raymond Gerberich, Harry A. Green and Albert H. Jorgenson. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1962. 622 p.

According to the authors this text is a supplement to the second editions of two earlier books revised in 1953 and 1954, *Measurement and Evaluation in the Elementary School* and *Measurement and Evaluation in the Secondary School*. This new text is organized into five sections, "Acquiring Background for Pupil Appraisal," "Using Standardized Tests and Techniques," "Constructing and Using Classroom Tests and Techniques," "Applying Statistical Procedures to Measurement and Evaluation Results," and "Measuring and Evaluating in the School Subjects." This last topic takes up nearly half of the 622 pages and in it the authors review extensively the special tests available in each subject area. A liberal use of samples is made in this exposition. This section of the text is encyclopedic in nature and will probably see great use.

After presenting a background for understanding and study of the subject in Part I, the authors discuss the use of standardized tests in terms of type-cate-

gories, e.g., achievement tests, and personality inventories. The analyses of the uses and limitations of each particular type of test are well done and most valuable.

Four chapters are devoted to the construction and use of tests by teachers. The chapter on the Oral, Essay, and Short Answer Tests appears to be the weakest of the four, possibly because the authors have concerned themselves mainly with the use of these tests for the examination of the content of pupils' answers. The use of these types of examinations for measuring the effectiveness of the expression of ideas or the manner in which the response is given is discussed in portions of various chapters in Part 5.

Part 4 of the text contains two chapters which describe ways of analyzing and interpreting test results through the use of statistical procedures. These are "cookbook" chapters and as such are well and sparely written. It is not possible to cover this much ground in two brief chapters and spend any time on theoretical considerations. This section is intended as a quick reference and could not be considered as a satisfactory substitute for a beginning course in statistical methods.

In their preface the authors state that, "It is also believed that the volume provides a systematic and readily usable handbook for any serious student or teacher requiring a straightforward and understandable discussion of all the fundamental ideas and techniques of evaluation in the classroom." Without question this book will see wide use as a first text for courses in evaluation, and is likely to prove equally valuable as a handbook.

—Reviewed by R. H. KERCE and DAVID TURNEY.

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