School - based Assessment.

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All of us live in a society. All of us have been students. All of us are familiar with schools. We may be tempted to believe, that we know social reality because we belong to a society. We may similarly be tempted to believe, that we know educational reality because we have been educated.

From personal perspective we can describe our experiences and explain their meanings. But such personal interpretations give no valid basis from which to generalize about other learners and learning situations.

For educators who are concerned about understanding the society, the student, and the school, something more is needed. If they are to reach educational decisions based on more than individual opinions , they must seek more objective data.

All societies provide opportunities for the individual to learn the appropriate behaviors and approved values of his group through social interaction. In a simple society the culture is relatively stable and slow to change. The child can learn his culture through direct primary relationships with his family, his peers, and adults beyond his family. In a complex society the culture is rapidly changing. Social roles are too numerous and complex for any one individual to learn. We turn to an analysis of the school as the social system.

As children enter school they quickly become aware of one basis for school organization, that of age. Their admission itself is dependent on age. Furthermore, they find schools organized into age-structured grades which they are expected to move through as they grow older.

Each school has to accommodate a broad spectrum of behavior according to age. Secondary organization is radically different from elementary. As children move from elementary to high school, they must make the abrupt change from a self-contained classroom with a single teacher to a departmentalized school with each subject taught by a different teacher.

Clearly all children are not at the same level of ability or achievement at any given age-grade level; moreover, as they progress through school their individual differences increase. Some school districts have eliminated the grade level by providing ungraded units. Most frequently these have been primary units incorporating the first two years of school. Most of these ungraded plans keep children of the same age level together.

Special schools organized on the basis of scholastic ability are relatively few in number. These schools for the academically talented students admit the students by examination. A few other public schools select their students on the basis of academic ability and group the special classes. These special classes for academically talented students are much commoner than special schools. Grouping by ability is not new on the educational scene. If teachers found a child's performance too much at variance with his test scores, they were often admonished to retest the child; test scores were expected to be predictive of academic behavior. Today the use of ability grouping, frequently on the basis of reading ability, is widespread. But there is still no conclusive evidence that such grouping in itself produces higher achievement. In those studies that do point to an academic gain, teaching methods and materials and other factors may account for difference.

School personnel from administrators to students interact with one another in many different relationships: as employers with employees, as supervisors with supervisees, as co-workers, as friends, as adult authority figures with children and their parents. In all these interactions certain behaviors are expected of those in certain positions. Teachers and parents have been closely related in the history of education. In the early elementary schools especially, teachers frequently lived with the families of their pupils on a rotating basis and, therefore, came to know them well. Teachers could expect that what they did at school would be reinforced by parents at home. Basically almost all parents want the best for their children. Most parents want their children to have teachers who are professionally competent, but they may be reluctant to accept

them as professional persons. Because they, too, have attended school, they may feel that they know what is best in education. Most of the attempts to improve parent- teacher relationships have focused on more effective means of communication. The most influential ambassador of the school, of course, is the student. What he tells or does not tell his parents of the events of the school day conveys more than any more planned communication.

In relationships with students, teachers are clearly super ordinate. Children learn to give the teacher what she wants. For example, the teacher of art class selected one child's picture and held it up for the class to see. When she asked whether they saw the "nice" effect in the picture, the children agreed. When she asked whether they "enjoyed" the lesson, many raised their hands in approval. Again, when she asked whether they would "do better next time", many also raised their hands to indicate that they would. They had responded to the words: "nice", "enjoyed", and "do better next time". The children obviously wanted to win the teacher's approval by giving the required response.

All relationships in the school, of course, are influenced by the relationships among the students and, in turn, these relationships reflect the climate of the classroom groups and the school in which they occur. If teachers are to communicate effectively with students in a classroom, they must have some understanding of student-student relationships.

The teacher can consider individual children and what their relationships signify. Some children are clearly identified as "stars", that is, they are at the hub of a number of choices received. Are these children leaders in class activities, or are they only the most chosen as friend? Some children are isolates, that is, they are not chosen at all; some are consciously rejected, that is, they receive deliberate negative nominations. What is the meaning of their isolation or rejection to themselves and to other members of the class? The teacher cannot find all the reasons for these patterns of relationships, but he can use class activities as opportunities to encourage new relationships.

For any culture to survive, it must be transmitted to the new generation. This has been true since man's beginning. If the man is to survive, he must learn to achieve peace, peace with honor for all men. Only in a world made safe for man's existence can a given society perpetuate itself.

To achieve the goal of social survival, then, nations of vastly different cultures must interact. To act intelligently in international relations requires knowledge and understanding of other cultures, of mutual problems. What, then, is the role of the school in educating for social survival? One approach provides opportunities for students to gain information and understanding about diverse cultures and to develop attitudes and skills that can contribute to peace. It involves the study of the social sciences, of human relations, of foreign languages, of creative arts, indeed of all that can aid man's understanding.

Perhaps the most significant opportunities are those that give students and teachers a chance to come to know, to work with, and to live with students and teachers from other lands. Foreign student and exchange programs make these opportunities possible. Many organizations now offer low-cost travel to students and teachers. Many colleges now arrange a year abroad for their students, using the facilities of foreign colleges. Students with appropriate language skills can attend foreign colleges as regular students. High-school students can be exchange students or live with families abroad for a summer or a school year. All these experiences can make the world real for students. Thus students can be better citizens of their country, because they are better equipped to live in an independent world.