

densers, effect of dielectric. (Numerical problems involving an application of the law of inverse squares need not be set.)

(c) The electric current: demonstration of its existence by its chemical, magnetic and thermal effects: the simple voltaic cell and its defects; Leclanche cell, dry cell; lead accumulator. (The nature of the electrodes when charged and discharged should be known, but details of the chemical processes involved should not be required.)

(d) The magnetic field due to a current, galvanometers for detecting currents, force on a current-carrying conductor in a magnetic field (treated qualitatively), the moving-coil galvanometer, ammeters, the simple motor; moving-coil loud-speaker.

(e) Faraday's laws of electrolysis with simple numerical applications.

(f) Ohm's law; potential difference, resistance, electromotive force; voltmeters; comparison of resis-

tances by meter bridge; resistivity; shunts. Comparison of e.m.f.'s with potentiometer.

(g) Heating effects of current; kilowatt hour; consumption of energy in D.C. circuits, costs of domestic supply.

(h) Experiments to illustrate the fundamental phenomena of electromagnetic induction; direction of induced currents; simple forms of A.C. and D.C. dynamos.

(i) Simple demonstration of the magnetic, heating and chemical effects of A.C. One type of A.C. ammeter. The comparison of the behavior of a condenser in an A.C. and a D.C. circuit. Effect of a choke on the strength of the current in an A.C. circuit. Transformers; advantages and disadvantages in using A.C. and of high voltage transmission.

(j) A simple study of the production and properties of electrons; the diode valve as a rectifier.

# How Can We Decide What to Teach? \*

By Harold H. Drummond\*\*

HOW can we decide what to teach? Let me share with you my own concerns about this basic curriculum question. I wish I knew the answer. There are times — brief moment they are — when I wish I could give you the final word today so that you would nevermore hereafter have to worry about deciding. For just a second or two I wish that I could be sure — that you could be sure — but then I realize, as Elmer Davis has so simply stated the rebuttal, **“But We Were Born Free.”**

This nation was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the principle — among others — that honest men may honestly disagree; that if they all say what they think, a majority of the people will be able to distinguish truth from error; that in the competition in the market place of ideas, the sounder ideas will in the long run win out. For almost four years past we have been engaged in a cold civil war — it is nothing less — testing whether any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.

I believe it will endure, but only if we stand up for it. The frightened men who are trying to frighten

us, because they have no faith in their country, are wrong; and even wronger are the smart men who are trying to use the frightened men for their own ends. The United States has worked; the principles of freedom on which it was founded — free thought as well as political liberty — have worked. This is the faith once delivered to the fathers — the faith for which they were willing to fight and, if necessary, die, but for which they fought and won. Those men, whose heirs and beneficiaries we are, risked, and knew they were risking, their fortunes and their sacred honor. We shall have no heirs and beneficiaries, and shall deserve to have none, if we lack the courage to preserve the heritage they left for us... This will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave.<sup>1</sup>

And so I'm fundamentally glad that I don't have the answer for you today — **for you were born free.** But decisions have to be made. They cannot be put off. Every day teachers in the schools you represent have to decide:

- ...whether or not to have a prayer during the opening exercises.
  - ...whether or not to teach the glory of war.
  - ...whether to continue teaching an outworn and outmoded of measures or to develop competence in the metric system used throughout most of the rest of the world.
  - ...whether to teach about children in Holland or about children in Indonesia, or about both, or about neither.
  - ...whether to teach about great Negroes in our history or to confine our study to "white" Americans.
  - ...whether to sing a hymn or just a song.
  - ...whether to sing a song because of its relationship to a unit of work — or to sing a song just because it is fun to sing.
  - ...whether to spend thirty minutes on arithmetic — or forty — or fifty — or sixty.
  - ...whether to teach children folk dances openly or whether to provide, somewhat surreptitiously, "folk games."
  - ...whether to help children find answers to questions they ask — or whether to steer clear of all questions except those that are clearly academic and safely non-controversial.
- There are several ways of proceeding, of course.

Among the possibilities are these:

**Simply use what's in the textbooks.** This procedure is pretty safe. Be sure to adopt textbooks in everything and make sure that every child has the same book. Start on page one and work logically right thru the books. To be extra sure, have all the books screened by everybody you can think of to be sure there is nothing controversial in them!

**Ask the kids what they want to learn.** This procedure is fraught with danger, yet certainly this is a factor that has to be considered. In spite of what some of our critics say, I don't believe that teachers have ever relied solely on this approach.

**Consult the parents.** Lot of persons recommend this procedure highly — but there are some problems connected with it. Unfortunately, all parents don't agree!

**Teach just what the supervisors say should be taught.** Safe ground again. No boats will be rocked by such a procedure — and supervisors are pretty savage creatures many times, too. They usually have some good ideas.

**Follow the guides put out by the state department of education.** If you have such guides the safe thing to do is follow them slavishly. Be sure that

everything is taught just as the state department has recommended.

**Tell the teachers what to teach.** After all, you are the principal, aren't you? What did they hire for? Assert yourself!

**Don't decide.** Let nature take its course, and every teacher his. You can't be criticized for being an autocrat this way. Perhaps you can become well known for being "democratic."

You know, I expect, that I don't think that any of these is, in and of itself, a satisfactory basis for selecting curriculum content. And no combination of two or more of them, or even all of them, is satisfactory either. So what do we do? Where do we go for help?

May I suggest four basic convictions (some of you may prefer to regard them as hunches) that undergird choice-making, that provide some guidance for deciding what we shall teach:

1. No decision can be made intelligently about anything except in terms of values to be supported or values held.
2. The principal can't decide by himself.
3. Hammering out decisions is hard work. It requires, thought, time, willingness to compromise, and effective leadership.

Within this basic framework, then, let's turn to the question and attack it directly.

### **How can we decide what to teach? In Terms of Our Values**

We decide in terms of what we want children to learn, in terms of what we want them to become. We decide in terms of our values. Unfortunately, decisions are not simple and easy, because values sometimes reinforce each other and sometimes cancel each other. Also, most values are relative and may change in the light of circumstances. Nevertheless, it is possible to agree on some yardsticks to use.

**We want to teach our children to be loyal to country and mankind.** We select content to help children develop loyalty to, concern for, understanding of, and interest in this land of ours and the principles which have made it great. Loyalty to country, as essential as it is, is not sufficient, however. We want to teach our children concern for all of mankind, concern for principles such as those enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Until the whole world subscribes to such principles, wholeheartedly and with dedication, we shall continue to have wars — hot or cold or simmering.

We want our children to be literate. Why? So we may remain free. Listen to some of our forefathers:

**Daniel Webster:** "On the diffusion of education among the people rests the preservation and perpetuation of our free institutions."

**Thomas Jefferson:** "By the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness."

**James A. Garfield:** "Next in importance to freedom and justice is popular education, without which neither justice nor freedom can be permanently maintained."

**Horace Mann:** "Education is our only political safety. Outside of this ark all is deluge."

And the kind of literacy required for the preservation and improvement of our democracy is no longer, if it ever was, encompassed by the traditional 3 R's. It is still important for us to teach children to read well, write legibly, and figure accurately. But reading well is laboriously copying a model; and figuring accurately is more than simple regurgitation and intelligently, how to speak clearly and distinctly, how to observe carefully, how to participate in groups effectively, how to find answers to problems, and how to make intelligent choices.

**We want our children to be creatively imaginative.** Margaret Mead, one of our keenest minds, recently revisited Manus Island in the Admiralty group off New Guinea just twenty-five years after her first anthropological study there. In the meantime a million Americans had come and gone — young men in uniform — defending freedom and living its fruits even in a military organization. In thinking about her experience and what she learned from these Manus Islanders who are jumping from primitive living to the twentieth century in a generation, Margaret Mead writes the following in her recent book entitled **New Lives for Old:**

For what we need today is imagination, imagination free from sickly nostalgia, free from a terror of machines bred of mediaeval fantasies or from the blind and weather-bound dependence of the peasant or the fisherman. And yet that imagination must not be empty imagination and a free imagination are not the same thing. From a room out of which all the devils have been swept come only meditations about other devils or counter-devils. Then the mind is free only to take horns on or off the frightening face of the future...

This book... is based on the belief that American civilization is not simply the last flower to bloom on

the outmoded tree of European history, doomed something new and different. American civilization is new because it has come to rest on a philosophy of production and plenty instead of saving and scarcity, and new because the men who built it have themselves incorporated the ability to change and change swiftly as need arises. This book is based on the belief that Americans have something to contribute to a changing world which is precious, which Americans have developed, thru three and a half centuries of beginning life, over and over, in a virgin land, is a belief that men can learn and change — quickly, happily, without violence, without madness, without coercion, and of their own free will... As we have learned to change ourselves, so we believe that others can change also, and we believe that they will want to change, that men have only to see a better way of life to reach out for it spontaneously.<sup>2</sup>

To keep that "something precious" in American civilization alive, we must, as we work with children, stimulate their imagination — their creative imagination. It was imagination that created the assembly line, the photo-electric cell, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, the free public school system, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the free and responsible press. Ralph Emerson said it in these words: "What the tender and poetic youth dreams today, and conjures up with inarticulate speech, is tomorrow the vociferated result of public opinion, and the day after is the character of nations."

So, if our nation is to continue to have character, our children must have creative, imaginative dreams of a better land, a better world, a better life. And we who have responsibilities for helping select curriculum content have another yardstick or guidepost to help us. We select content which in our best judgment will help children develop creative, imaginative power. Deliberately we eliminate from the curriculum experiences, activities and content which interfere with or contribute little to the achievement of this goal.

**We want our children to be healthy — mentally and physically.** Somehow we want our children to learn to live with themselves successfully. We want them to accept themselves — to be able to wake up in the middle of the night and go back to sleep successfully. We want them to have strong and healthy bodies — as straight and as sturdy as possible. We want them to know how to play so as to recreate interest and zest in living. And we want them to know how to work, to lose themselves in work, to submerge themselves in following a goal.

**We want our children to be thoughtful.** We want them to base action on thought instead of on fear, tra-

dition, prejudice, considerations of economic gain, or all the other possible bases. We want them to be thoughtful, too, in terms of the "nice things to do" — acts which may best be described by words such as courtesy, kindness, helpfulness, friendliness. Perhaps most of all we want them to know how to use their God-given intelligence to find answers to problems, to think thru issues, to analyze statements made by other persons, to guide their own choice-making. Most of the people who have really made a difference in human history have been thinkers — thoughtful men and women. As our civilization continues to become more complex, the demand for thoughtful persons continues to mount.

**We want our children to be courageous.** Free men need to be courageous or they will cease to be free. What we have in this republic is worth preserving and improving. And so we must build courage into our boys and girls — courage to stand for the right in spite of criticism, courage to stand for the right in spite of peer pressure, in spite of sneer and slander.

We have recently passed thru a tremendously significant period of history in our land when, for a time, it began to appear that freedom to differ from what certain persons or groups thought was no longer to be tolerated. I'm thankful that that battle seems at the present to be, if not wholly won, at least so conclusively held in suspended animation that the air seems cleaner and fresher and more worth breathing again. Some people were hurt, were vilified, were practically crucified because we, as a people, were afraid to be brave. If you haven't seen the film, "Three Brave Men," — try to see it when it comes to your neighborhood. Also try to get in at the first of the show. It is based on a true story of an honest servant who was caught in our hysteria.

Growing up in such an age — thru a time when many people seem less willing to stand for what they truly believe than a generation or two ago — our children are bound to be affected. And they will learn their standards of courage from us. The question becomes, then, a very personal one. Do we stand forthrightly for the values which we espouse? State of New York, at Albany on October 24, 1952, made a memorable statement which has been quoted frequently. It bears repeating here.

God knows, there is risk in refusing to act till the facts are all in; but is there not greater risk in abandoning the conditions of all rational inquiry? Risk for risk, for myself I had rather take my chance that some traitors will escape detection than spread abroad a spirit of general suspicion and distrust which accepts rumor and gossip in place of undisputed and unintimidated inquiry. I believe that that community is already in process of dissolution

where each man begins to eye his neighbor as a possible enemy, where nonconformity with the accepted creed, political as well as religious, is a mark of disaffection; where denunciation, without specification or backing, takes the place of evidence; where orthodoxy chokes freedom of dissent; where faith in the eventual supremacy of reason has become so timid that we dare not enter our convictions in the open lists to win or lose. Such fears as there are, are a solvent which can eat out the cement that binds the stones together; they may in the end subject us to a despotism as evil as any that we dread; and they can be allayed only insofar as we refuse to proceed on suspicion, and trust one another until we have tangible ground for misgiving. The mutual confidence on which all else depends can be maintained only by an open mind and a brave reliance upon free discussion. I do not say that these will suffice; who knows but we may be on a slope which leads down to aboriginal savagery. But of this I am sure; if we are to escape, we must not yield a foot in demanding a fair field, and an honest race, for all ideas.<sup>3</sup>

How can we decide what to teach? By clearly deciding what we want our children to learn — then by using our best judgment to select content which seems to promise the maximum probable achievement of the goals we have set. It seems to me, this year of 1957, that we want our children:

- to be loyal to country and to mankind
- to be literate
- to be creatively imaginative
- to be healthy
- to be thoughtful
- to be courageous

Achievement of such goals is essential for the maintenance of freedom and opportunity. Content should be selected or repudiated in terms of its probable contribution. The best judgment of every elementary school principal and of every elementary school teacher must be marshalled in the process. The United States has "something precious" to communicate to the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Elmer Davis, *But We Were Born Free*. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1954. p. 114-115.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Mead. *New Lives for Old*. New York: William Morrow and Company. 1956. p. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Judge Learned Hand, as quoted in "New News," *National Education Association*. Vol. 7. No. 3 (Feb. 27, 1953), p. 8.