

Research and Evaluation

Panel IIIA

Panelist Passow was particularly emphatic about the need for more effective help in evaluation techniques. "Title I is the first Federal law with built-in evaluation," he said. "The schools need assistance in evaluating their title I proposals. We're trying new ideas, but we are using old, inapplicable evaluating techniques."

This point was referred to again and again during the meetings. There is no way to measure self-concept in a 4-year-old, for instance, although the building of self-concept is one of the archstones in Head Start projects. There is no way to measure the value of field trips for preliterate or other students unable to take paper-and-pencil tests.

The questions Dr. Passow raised about the need for research were answered different ways in different contexts throughout the meetings. Opinion ranged from believing that present research is adequate but not being used, to the belief that very little is known about even the most basic elements of education. If research does exist, the group would like to see it put into usable form and widely disseminated.

Dr. Martin made the final panel presentation. "We are in considerable danger," he said, "that Head Start and other preschool programs that appear to be so successful mask the fact that we know next to nothing about early education." He called for longitudinal research on the consequences of early education.

There was unanimous agreement on the need for continued research. As one observer put it, "If we don't go on with research, in 1976 we'll still be fighting the war on poverty with the tactics of 1962."

Panel IIB

Dr. Zigler said that in his long experience with Operation Head Start, "I found not only reluctance but downright apathy to research. Too many educators treat the researcher as an enemy, not as someone to work with in seeing how we can all best serve children. We all want the best for these kids, but we aren't going to find it unless we keep looking. Now we have a kind of numbers game—how many kids and how much money—but no real evaluation. That's because it is easier to count kids and dollars than to evaluate motivation and morale."