

time and effort needed to become competent to work effectively on them. We must not expect that some attractive title or some simple principle can include all that we must do. Every step of the way we must try to see clearly what needs to be done and how to do it, and then get the training and the materials to do it well.

In the third place, we must plan and work on a program that represents a big step forward. Minor adjustments, small contributions of time and energy are too little to do more than frustrate both teachers and pupils. Unless we invest enough time, thought, and energy to create a critical mass—to use a term often employed in science—we will get no return.

When the plan for the program is being worked out, attention should also be given to the evaluative process that will furnish periodically evidence of how the program is succeeding and where inadequacies are being encountered. This continuing appraisal is necessary to afford a basis for making necessary improvements in the program and for detecting weaknesses before it is too late to eliminate them. However, in many cases the instruments for appraisal will need to be devised or obtained from special projects now under way.

Widely used achievement tests are focused on the educational performances of average children, since this affords the most efficient use of testing time where the purpose is to measure the mean or median achievement of class groups. Typically, 80 percent of all the test exercises lie within the band of 40 percent to 60 percent level of difficulty. There are so few exercises representative of the current achievement of disadvantaged children that their scores on most of these tests are not greatly different from zero. This does not mean that they have learned nothing. The test has not sampled reliably the levels of learning with which they may have been involved. For this reason new tests are being constructed to aid in the evaluation.

In addition to tests, we need accurate reports on the learning activities undertaken, on results of observations and interviews with representative samples of disadvantaged children focused on their learning practices, and on the development of attitudes, interests, and habits relevant to the educational objectives. Some schools are devising promising plans for evaluation that may be more widely useful. At least annually, but preferably more often, evaluation data should be reviewed and studied, and the implications for program modification carefully considered. In this way we can hope to make constructive improvements in programs through experience.

I think it is clear to all of us, but still worth reiterat-

ing, that the handicaps of disadvantaged children are serious and will not be overcome in a short time. This problem calls for long-range plans, not for temporary makeshifts. Each individual child needs years of learning experiences which are meaningful to him, which he can master at each stage of his development, from which he can gain confidence and competence, and from which he can emerge able to participate without serious limitations in all the important functions of modern life. So for him we must plan a program with which he can work for 14 or more years.

To develop a program that is highly effective requires the further education of personnel, the devising of curricula, teaching procedures and materials of instruction, and the testing and modification of plans and materials through evaluation experience. Hence, for a school to reach an adequate stage in its work with disadvantaged children will take several years. If we are seriously determined to raise the educational opportunities for these pupils, we must think of this as part of the long-time responsibility of the school. It is not an ephemeral effort which can be forgotten in a few years.

The conditions of life today require the education of everyone who would participate fully in it. At least 15 percent to 20 percent of our children are not now attaining the level of education required for employment, for intelligent citizenship, for responsible parenthood, or for achieving their own individual potential. These disadvantaged children include those with one or more of various kinds of educational handicaps arising from a corresponding variety of physical, educational, cultural, and emotional conditions. The children are distributed throughout our country, but the particular patterns of handicaps vary widely among the schools. The task for each of us is to study the disadvantaged children in our own school, seeking to understand their handicaps and then to work out a comprehensive program for the school, a program that is calculated to make an effective attack upon the problems these children face and that uses the resources available to the school. As the program is carried on, periodic appraisal should provide bases for improvements.

Over a period of time, we can hope to develop paths by which the disadvantaged children in each school may learn to participate with their more fortunate companions more fully in American life. This is a difficult and long-time task, but it is so essential to our political and social ideals and successful efforts will be so rewarding that this hard job is worth our big investment.