

A. V. Kelly.
TEACHING MIXED ABILITY CLASSES.
London: Harper & Row, 1974.
125 pp. \$4.00.

The strength of Kelly's book lies with a succinctly expressed philosophy of individualized instruction, an acknowledgement of many educational problems in the areas of differentiated instruction, plus a discussion of the changes needed to prepare teachers so that they may "welcome, initiate and thus control change." No major innovations, no cataclysmic theoretical departure from the norm. The clear explanations of theory and practice, however, make this book a useful supplemental source for pre-service and in-service teachers.

Moreover, Kelly's book comes at an opportune moment. Since publication (1974) the educational pendulum has swung rapidly from individualized, sometimes contracted or modular, instruction; from emphasis upon relevancy and creativity in the curriculum; from student choice of subject matter; only to return to an earlier focus upon the teaching and learning of basic skills. Presently, the North American back-to-basics movement demands that teachers renew their attention to spelling lists, grammar, composition, and multiplication tables. This approach tends to overlook the wide range of individual differences in any classroom. It is at this point that Kelly's book may become valuable to the educational audience.

Kelly recognizes that mixed-ability teaching or differentiated instruction for heterogeneous groups, while implying equality in education, must find the "most efficient means of leading individual pupils towards our educational objectives".

Kelly bases his discussion on several points. Individualization in mixed ability classes requires that educational objectives remain the same, but that content materials differ to meet individual needs. Teachers will need to adapt instructional materials to individual learning styles. Kelly believes that teachers will teach the basic skills of academic discipline through projects and interest areas of pupils rather than through isolated drills. Occasionally, the teacher will use whole-class instruction, but more often will provide instruction through individual work and small sub-groups.

The practicing teacher will find Kelly's chapter on groups and grouping extremely useful as an organizational tool. Kelly presents the theory adequately and then gives the reader four basic types of groupings, complete with diagrams: ability, socio-metric, interest, and individual need. As any teacher knows, great care must be taken in grouping, since this factor alone is very important for both academic achievement and behavioral control. The resultant learning environment may provide for easier mastery of basic skills.

Kelly touches upon the problems of the slow learners and non-readers in the mixed ability classroom. Kelly offers sound advice à la Bruner and Piaget, but no cookbook solutions. Similarly, Kelly discusses teacher-pupil relationships, as well as teacher training.

The teacher, to effectively plan individualized activities, will make full use of intellectual resources and skilled methods in order to formulate educational decisions for each child. To prepare for this awesome role, the teacher must be highly trained in his own area of learning, in his theoretical background of education, in his professional studies, and in his practice of teaching. If the inter-relationships among all these elements are developed, the teacher may then adapt to a different role in the classroom: moreover, the teacher will be prepared to contribute to the future changes in education.

To many educators, Kelly reiterates familiar philosophy and problems in the area of individualized instruction. But whereas many educators have become weary and disheartened in the search for solutions to these problems, Kelly remains hopeful that the cooperative efforts of parties interested in education will lead to solutions, to improve the educational atmosphere in the classroom and in society.

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Howard E. Blake.

**CREATING A LEARNING-CENTERED CLASSROOM —
A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TEACHERS.**

New York: Hart Publishing Co. Inc., 1977.

340 pp. \$12.95 Hardcover. \$7.95 Softcover.

As the title indicates, this book is intended as a practical guide for teachers in developing learning centres in their classrooms. There is a great deal of literature available on *why* one should set up this kind of classroom; and although the programs described may seem exciting, they are often so far removed from one's own experience that attempts to implement them are rarely made. There also exists a plethora of materials of the "instant kit" variety suggesting the kinds of materials to use for centres. The need is no longer to know *why* one should include learning centres in one's classroom or even to know what to put in them; it is, rather, to know *how* to go about it. Howard Blake's book responds to this need. He provides advice on how to begin, offering models comprising ascending levels of sophistication, and giving suggestions for all aspects of developing the centres from preparing the materials to storing a completed centre for future use.

Blake organizes his material logically so that one can follow it