

Gene Stanford.

**DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM GROUPS:
A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TEACHERS.**

New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1977.

288 pp. \$10.00 (\$4.95).

Stanford has evolved, as many intelligent and sensitive educators do. He started at the intuitive level, randomly dealt with the group process and its development, and was positively rewarded. This led to a search for theoretical backing, experimentation, a systematization of his intuitions, and finally, the development of a theory which he has translated into practical implications for the classroom teacher. This is the appeal of the book. It has the potential to raise the level of consciousness of classroom teachers regarding group development, without becoming "theory bound." It provides many very specific examples.

Stanford's practical guide outlines a five-stage theory of group development for the classroom. He acknowledges the influence of R. J. Havighurst and E. Erikson on his theory, and elaborates his rationale based on the work of B. Tuckman and the more classroom-oriented research of B. Stiltner. Fundamental to his stages and the organization of his book is the importance of recognizing group development as part of the learning situation and the belief that the teacher can have a direct influence on the growth of the group.

In his first chapter, he emphasizes that the book is intended to be practical, referring those who seek a more theoretical basis to the work of Richard and Patricia Schmuck. He also describes his five stages of classroom group development — orientation, norm establishment, coping with conflict, productivity, and termination — outlining the format that follows.

Each stage is dealt with as a chapter and includes a brief summary of the characteristics, suggestions for helpful teacher behaviour, and very specific activities for implementation. The exception is the norm establishment stage, to which he attributes the most importance. For this reason, it is divided into five sub-stages. Each is developed in separate chapters.

Stanford rigorously adheres to his initially-defined format, making the book easy to read but almost monotonous as the chapters develop. The personalized touch of extracts from a former student's diary and some anecdotes of his own are the only, but very positive, aspects that provide variation and interest.

The activities are fun and appropriate for classroom use with young adults, but it is often difficult to envision adapting them to the middle elementary level, and usually impossible to imagine using them with very young children.

Although he espouses a philosophy of integrating group process activities with curriculum content, at no time does he really develop an example. Instead, many isolated, game-oriented possibilities are listed for each stage, leaving this rather difficult task up to the teacher. For the creative educator this would present no problem, but for others it might tend to promote a random and direct application of the suggestions without consideration as to the specific curriculum needs of the particular classroom situation.

This potential problem could have been alleviated if Stanford had devoted more time to developing one example at each stage, demonstrating how it specifically met both the group development and curriculum needs. The remaining examples could then have been organized in an appendix. In addition, this approach would have made the reading of the text more fluid and cohesive.

The more sophisticated teacher might prefer to be exposed to some other theories (for example, the work of Shutz, Parson and Bales, Gibbs) if only briefly; this would mesh Stanford's sequential development into an overall theoretical framework. As it stands, though, the book still provides a useful focus for this type of teacher. It can be used as a form of checklist for the teacher's performance, gives the encouragement to pursue one's beliefs, and sparks one's interest in reading further. Furthermore, it definitely offers a challenge to a teacher to use Stanford's ideas as a springboard, from which to develop other creative, relevant applications and experimentations for a particular classroom situation.

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George Woodcock.
GABRIEL DUMONT.
Ontario: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1978.
64 pp. \$2.95.
Martin Spigelman.
WILFRID LAURIER.
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Gabriel Dumont and *Wilfrid Laurier* are two books in a ninety-volume series of biographies of Canadian men and women designed to be used in Canadian Studies at the secondary school level.