

## ***From the Editor***

### **Technology for All Americans**

As this issue of the JTE goes to press, Phase I of the International Technology Education Association's "Technology for All Americans" (TAA) project is just getting underway. With support from the National Science Foundation and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the project represents a unique opportunity for our profession to broadly communicate the belief that *every* student should have the benefit of some formal education *about* our technological world. This is our profession's best singular opportunity to carry that message to the educational establishment and to share with them the relevant ideas and models we've developed since Warner (1947) first proposed a "A Curriculum to Reflect Technology" nearly half a century ago.

The stated goal of Phase I of the TAA project is to develop a long-term vision that includes a "rationale and structure for technology education in the future." In a sense, our profession has been working on that task for at least fifty years. This time around, however, there are several factors working to the advantage of the TAA project. First, the project's title explicitly communicates the belief that technology education should be required content for *all* students. Second, the project suggests this vision ". . . should interface with science, mathematics, engineering, and other disciplines." Toward that end, the project has drawn about half of the participants for its National Commission from *other* disciplines. Most importantly, these other disciplines—particularly science and mathematics education—have recently begun to recognize the relevance of technology as *content* in the curriculum. Likewise, engineers are understandably supportive of this notion.

While some fear these "outside" contributors might distort the "vision," it is ludicrous to continue the dialogue without their input. Their participation in the TAA project lends it credibility and the "vision" will undoubtedly benefit from these fresh perspectives. The fact that we have been developing ideas and models for technology education for so long provides us with a substantive point of view to "bring to the table." If the educational establishment in America is indeed serious about the inclusion of technology in the curriculum (as nearly all educational reform efforts to date would suggest), it behooves them to listen to our ideas on the subject. Few understand the issues involved as we do, and none outside our field have developed better curriculum models for this purpose. Thus, the TAA project provides the vehicle for *our* perspective to be heard.

There is considerable concern in our profession that we will lose some degree of control with respect to the curriculum and delivery mechanisms for technology education. That horse left the gate some time ago! In the move from industrial arts to technology education, we redefined the scope of our profession very broadly. Technology teachers should no more expect to monopolize the teaching of technology than should English teachers hope to corner the market on writing. Not only should other disciplines be teaching *about* technology, but they would be remiss in not doing so. The unique perspective each of these disciplines brings to the task is already beginning to result in different models of "technology education."

Rather than deny others their options in this regard, we should welcome those different models while unabashedly promoting those which have made us so successful for the past century. Our methods have been characterized by hands-on activities and individualized instruction supported by a general laboratory that allowed students countless options for creative problem-solving. We must be sure that others understand that there is no better substitute for this hands-on approach to technological problem-solving. Regrettably, we seem to have forgotten this ourselves, as "modular technology education" rolls across the countryside. As we replace our general laboratories with pre-packaged modules, we *willingly* exchange an incredibly rich constructivist environment/curriculum for lesser facilities and questionable curriculum. While these turnkey solutions represent *an* approach to "technology education," I think we should promote more robust models as we continue the discussion with others outside our field.

The TAA project gives us a unique opportunity to promote whatever models we feel appropriate for technology education. While only a small number of professionals in our field serve on the project's National Commission, the project has begun and will continue to solicit input from the profession as a whole. Let your voice be heard.

### **References**

- Warner, W. E. (1947, April). *A curriculum to reflect technology*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Industrial Arts Association, Columbus, OH.