

A Review of "Dialogue in the Forensic Community: Proceedings of the Conference on Forensic Education," edited by Jack Kay and Julie Lee. Published by the National Federation of State High School Association, 1990.

"Dialogue in the Forensic Community: Proceedings of the Conference on Forensic Education" is a useful, thought-provoking publication that should find its way to the bookshelf of every forensic educator. Filled with ideas generated at a three-day conference hosted by Northwestern University and sponsored by the National Federation of State High School Associations in December, 1989, the monograph is readable, thorough, and encourages action by all who value forensic experiences.

The fact that it reflects the views of leaders in forensic education at both the high school and university levels contributes to its uniqueness and value. Communication departments which offer speech pedagogy courses should adopt the proceedings as required reading for their graduate students. Topics discussed could provoke interesting debate and classroom discussion.

In 92 pages, the proceedings highlight many controversial issues which often threaten forensic activities. From workshops in debate and individual events, to recruitment of minority participants in forensic activities, the proceedings capture issues critical to educators and program administrators.

Upon reading the "Editor's Forward" and keynote addresses of David Zarefsky and Daryl Fisher, the tone of what is to follow in the proceedings is clear. Aristotle likely would praise the combination of ethical, pathetic, and logical proofs used by the writers. A sense of community and commitment are strongly communicated.

Even more important, however, is that the proceedings are solution-oriented. The conference participants endorsed 82 resolutions, all of which are justified briefly in the monograph.

Excerpts from many of the 30 position papers discussed at the conference are included. The papers focused specifically on issues related to six broad topic areas: Accreditation, Evaluation and Assessment; Role and Mission of Forensic Institutes; Forensic Director Recruitment; Enhancing Opportunities; Instructional Practices and the Role of Competition; Recruiting by Colleges, Mutual Interests, and Organizational Relations.

Many innovative approaches are advanced. Issues are presented in ways that focus on the similarities and interdependence of university and high school programs, rather than on differences and barriers to cooperation.

One example of a common concern discussed at the conference was summer workshops. A study related to the topic, conducted by Edward A. and Shelly S. Hinck, is included as the appendix of the proceedings. Forensic educators likely will find the perceptions it addresses familiar and useful when organizing and recruiting workshop participants.

Chapter 5 takes on the difficult challenge of organizing the resolutions debated during the Parliamentary Session held on the third day of the Conference on Forensic Education. Two major categories of motions are included: those related to general issues in forensic education (i.e., promotion of forensic activities externally and internally, teacher competency and development, program support, curriculum and instruction, serving students); those related to high school forensic institutes and workshops. Readers with emphasis in individual events are apt to find the resolutions related to the general issues category most interesting and relevant.

If there is a weakness in the proceedings, it is in regard to the question, "What next?" Will meaningful action be taken in response to the resolutions? As the editor warns, "Should these recommendations merely stay on the pages of this document, our efforts will have been for naught. The charge facing the forensic community is to carefully examine the recommendations, subject them to vigorous debate, and to implement those which will improve forensic education."

By reading "Dialogue in the Forensic Community: Proceedings of the Conference on Forensic Education," that important process can prosper.

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