

Instructional Services Fact Sheet #18

GOALS 2000-SCANS:

The Basic Bibliography of SCANS Reports

Instructional Services
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The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)
 U.S. Department of Labor (1990-1992)

I. What is SCANS and Why Is It Important to Every American?

The acronym "SCANS" stands for "Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills." The "Secretary" is the Secretary of Labor, who in 1990, was Elizabeth Dole. The Commission was appointed for a term of two years, 1990-1992. Former Labor Secretary, William E. Brock was chair. Dr. Arnold Packer, economist, co-author of the Hudson Institute's very influential report, *Workforce 2000*, 1987, and career federal government employee, was Executive Director.

Published in segments, the SCANS "report" appears complicated, seems innocuous. It affects every child and adult! 1) It establishes an official U.S. education curriculum. 2) Created in the Labor Department by a special commission, it is unknown to the public. 3) Piece-by-piece, it is being written into federal laws binding on every state and local school. The SCANS curriculum a) defines 5 worker attitudes/behaviors and 3 foundation communication/math skills which, b) must be taught at all levels, c) in all subjects, d) in workplace contexts, e) using "themes" selected from "traditional" subjects.

II. Annotated Bibliography of Key SCANS Reports:

Bibliographic Note: Authorship is not always acknowledged and some copyright dates are omitted.

1. Anon., What Work Requires of Schools: A Scans Report for AMERICA 2000. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, June 1991. 31p. + App. NOTE: Only report in both English and Spanish.

The first SCANS report, addressed to "Parents, Employers, and Educators," relied on a fear-of-unseen-enemy argument: Adult world and work have changed, therefore, you must see that school is changed, in order to "protect the future of your child, your business, and the health of American education." The report said that a SCANS study of 15 jobs in 5 sectors of the economy showed that all workers use the same set of "common competencies and skills." Therefore, schools are required, and business must demand, that every future worker know those competencies.

The five SCANS "competencies" are: Resources, Interpersonal, Information, Systems, and Technology. The three "foundation skills" are: Basic Skills, Thinking Skills, and Personal Qualities. It is these which require "new" standards, curricula, teaching methods, and materials in every school, especially in the five core subjects. From kindergarten, all must learn the requirements of work and life, i.e., team work, projects, experiments, problem solving, diaries, notebooks. Every child must think of "school" work as "real" work. Deficiencies must be assessed daily, and remedied.

The SCANS said that their work "pertains directly to National Goals #3 and #5," of the original six goals proclaimed in 1989 by President Bush. [#3: "American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve..." and #5: "Every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge..."]

2. Anon. Skills and Tasks for JOBS: A Scans Report for AMERICA 2000. n.d. , [IUB library Depository date: Apr. 9, 1992] Three independently numbered chapters and a separately numbered appendix: xi, 12, 77, 285, + 129 p. App's., total 444 pp.

The second report, intended "to help educators make high school courses more relevant to the needs of a modern workforce and to help employers ensure that their employees possess appropriate, up-to-date skills." Chapter 2 is for "teachers, curriculum developers, and others who are concerned primarily with ensuring that the skills are taught in their courses." It contains definitions and illustrative tasks for each competency and skill, arranged according to level of difficulty. Chapter 3 lists the SCANS competencies and skills ranked according to "criticality" for the second 35 jobs.

The Introduction provides some details about the "research" base and method. Initially, the list of "skills" was produced by "a group of experts" asked to "identify the major types of skills required to enter employment." Later, to find "information needed to write the first definitions of these skills" a literature search was conducted. The resulting definitions were then reviewed by "experts" and revised. Finally, the experts' list of skills and definitions was used to make the first "SCANS job analysis" of 15 jobs. After adjusting terms and definitions, 35 more jobs were "analyzed." Thus, the total data base for the competencies and foundations consists of "analyses" of 50 jobs.

"The job analyses themselves," they said, "were structured interviews with job experts (incumbents and supervisors of analyzed jobs) conducted by SCANS research staff, Department of Labor employees, or occupational analysts at state occupational analysis field centers..." The interviews, "generally took two to four hours to complete." Various statistical techniques were then applied to this "data." For the first 15 jobs, 62 interviews were conducted, for the 35 jobs, 142 interviews. The range was three to six interviews per job, the average was four interviews per job.

Furthermore, they wanted to set "levels of difficulty for the SCANS skills." So, they asked "20 persons who had fairly broad experience in professional or research positions relevant to occupational issues," to render judgments about the difficulty of each job task relative to specific SCANS "skills."

Fine as this may sound, none of it is "scientific research." It is twentieth century statistical technique applied to standard sixteenth century "armchair research" data. It is not objective, not observational. Statistically, it is insignificant. It cannot be replicated or verified. Nevertheless, this collection of opinions solicited from handfuls of picked workers and experts has been accepted as the national curriculum content and instructional method by the U.S. Congress and Department of Education.

The Introduction concludes with, "A NOTE OF CAUTION TO EMPLOYERS," telling them that they ought to "conduct their own in-house research to verify the applicability of SCANS competencies and foundations to their jobs." There is no note of caution to teachers telling them that they ought to conduct their own in-school research to verify the intellectual integrity and human consequences of making SCANS competencies the curriculum, for every grade, class, and teacher. Neither is there a note of caution to the country-at-large about a population which knows only the SCANS, or about children raised by parents and classroom managers who only know how to be SCANS workers.

3. Anon., Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance. U.S. Dept. of Labor. 1992. 75 p. + App.

The final report of the SCANS, two parts, published separately and together. Some significant details: a) SCANS involves all education, K-12, colleges, trade & vocational schools, businesses, trade associations (p.9). b) Both workplace and schools to be reorganized (p. 11-12). c) The National Goals Panel & others want a national examination system based on projects, portfolios, and performance evaluations, not on tests. (p. 60). d) From Middle School, all earn Certificates of Initial Mastery (CIMs) of SCANS competencies. e) Employers are "urged" to require CIMs from all job applicants (p. 63).

4. Anon., Teaching the SCANS Competencies. U.S. Department of Labor. 1993. 123 p.

SCANS report for teachers telling them how to incorporate the five SCANS competencies into all "core subjects:" English/writing, mathematics, science, social studies/ geography, history. Teaching procedures and resources are listed. Cites 22 examples, including the IndianaPLUS program. Discusses teaching SCANS to non-English speakers. Finally, there are sample SCANS assessment items.

5. Anon., SCANS Blueprint for Action: Building Community Coalitions. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1992. (56p + App.), 64 p.

A handbook on how to build "grassroots support" for SCANS in local communities. It includes specific procedures for building SCANS coalitions, cites 100+ coalitions across the nation, regional office locations and contact persons. In "A Message from Secretary of Labor Lynn Martin," she noted that educators, business, and labor all have different activities, but that,"SCANS needs to be fully integrated into education and training curricula, work organization, and skills standards."

Recommended NON-SCANS Bibliography

1983 Department of Education. A Nation at Risk. Washington D.C. Described as, "one of the first publications to warn of the dangers of our students being inadequately prepared," which is that the entire country is in danger.

1984/5 Sizer, Theodore R., Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin. Described as the rationale and first publication of A Study of High Schools, sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Independent Schools. In

1988 Departments of Labor and Education, The Bottom Line: Basic Skills in the Workplace. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office. 50 pp.

1988 (July) Departments of Labor, Education and Commerce, Building a Quality Workforce, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office. 61 pp.

1989

1990 (June) Report of Commission on Skills of the American Workforce, America's Choice., Rochester, NY: National Center on Education and the Economy

1991 (April) Department of Education, America 2000: An Education Strategy (Collection of documents that provide a comprehensive description of President Bush's America 2000 plan.)

1992