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TELEVISION REVIEW

Raising Hope About Schools

By WALTER GOODMAN

I don't know how many television programs I've watched over the years announcing victories in the classroom, but the number is doubtless higher than many second-graders can count. Yet generations of children continue to come out of schools, particularly in the inner cities, with a major in ignorance. It's enough to stir skepticism, along with despair.

So it is remarkable that "Early Learning," John Merrow's hourlong look at four innovative teaching methods now being used by hundreds of elementary schools, manages to rouse hope once again that "at-risk" children can be saved. Mr. Merrow invites trust by being an investigator instead of a cheerleader.

Under scrutiny tomorrow are:

¶James Comer's School Development Program, which emphasizes children's emotional and social

THE MERROW REPORT

Early Learning

PBS, tomorrow night
(Channel 13, New York, at 6)

John Tulenko and Karena O'Riordan, producers; Sonia Slutsky and James Spahr, assistant producers; John Merrow, host and executive producer.

needs and calls on parents and others in the community to pitch in.

¶Robert Slavin's Roots and Wings Program, which uses tutors to keep closely monitored pupils from falling behind.

¶E. D. Hirsch Jr.'s Core Knowl-

edge Foundation, which encourages youngsters' interest in everything from electricity to, you guessed it, dinosaurs.

¶Henry Levin's Accelerated Schools Project, which assumes all children are gifted and treats them accordingly.

The most instructive thing about these glimpses of very different approaches in action is what they have in common: a combination of a coherent plan, a modest amount of money and steady effort. You may be left with the feeling that given attentive parents and skilled teachers with faith in children's abilities, any plan can work.

Mr. Merrow drops in periodically

at the sample schools to see how things are going. Despite his finding that two teachers using the same methods may get different results, his upbeat assessment is in accord with a Carnegie Corporation report to be released this month: all four approaches are making a difference.

The Merrow Reports themselves, undecorated but workmanlike, are making a difference, presenting intelligent inquiries into significant matters.