

worked under history of education but always with a philosophical interest. From 1913 to this day my effort has been to work out a more effective outlook in education, beginning with the individual to upbuild him as a person,

but working always with society to bring true democracy into being. This is the line of formative influences I personally have followed. These are the persons and experiences that have brought me thus far.

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¶ *Two beginning teachers describe their first year on the job*

## And How We Have Learned!

JANE McDERMOTT and EILEEN FERGUSON

THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER coming straight from four years of college generally assumes she has plenty to teach but not much to learn. After all, she has had practice teaching all year, all those method courses, and psychology; so why shouldn't she know most all there is to know? We suppose we had somewhat the same idea when we started our teaching, but how we have learned!

So many times we have heard the expression "the impatience of youth." Beginning teachers, being young, generally have that impatience when they start. We have found that patience is one of the first qualities we had to learn. As first grade teachers, we found patience needed especially in beginning reading. We discovered that sentences, words, or letters appear to a first-grader like Chinese to an adult. Naturally such complexities can't be taught in a week or two, even to a child who learns quickly. The slower child needs extra

help and much repetition. After many days, one feels a faint glimmer of satisfaction, for he has recognized his name.

Patience must be present when, in spite of precautions and warnings, many of the little annoying things happen, such as spilling milk or paint. We wonder how we could handle without patience the child who insists on exclaiming, "I don't know how, Teacher. I don't know how. Is this how?" to everything that goes on whether it has been done before or not. Patience is nec-

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*Last September Jane McDermott and Eileen Ferguson were beginning teachers. Before they started their first year, they wrote an article called "We Will Enjoy Teaching," which our readers will remember from the October issue of EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP. Because we liked their enthusiastic approach to their profession, we have called upon these two young teachers again, this time asking them to tell us what they have learned during those first adventurous months. Here is their report.*

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essary with children who won't try. Oh, yes, we have learned Patience with a capital "P."

### *Like That Icy Plunge in Spring*

We have also learned to enjoy children and when to laugh or sympathize with them. No matter how sure you might feel of yourself, that approaching first day brings a little fear and nervousness. Funny though it may seem, the thought of thirty strange children depending on you is a little frightening. However, it is like taking that first plunge into the lake each spring. Once in, it's fine. We found it much easier than we expected. Laughter is one of the elements that helped us become acquainted with the children, that helped break the ice.

Fun and laughter is something we all understand and it offers a common ground for us. However, laughter has to be mastered, or it can be cruel. We have to prevent laughter at those who are not as well-coordinated as others. We must prevent ourselves from laughing at remarks or actions that have a serious meaning to the child who said or did them. Then again a little humor from us might not come amiss. It might change an annoying accident into an insignificant incident, putting child and children at ease and leaving us in a better frame of mind.

No matter how hard we try to prevent it, there always is some child who can't resist the desire of "taking a poke" at someone else. The victim generally is a frail child to whom tears and a desire for sympathy come easily: many times too easily. We are too quick to sympathize or admonish. Through many such experiences, we have come

to know when to sympathize and when not. We have learned there are some poor children who are starved for a little affection and attention, and then there are others who will take advantage of friendliness and carry things too far.

### *Boys May Sew and Girls May Hammer*

We were told in college to find the child's interests and develop his abilities along these interests. We have learned to do this and have found it very interesting and surprising, also challenging. We have found that occupations and interests are not necessarily divided by sexes, as we are inclined to believe in adults; for the boys like to sew and girls to hammer and saw. The children are interested in anything that is new to them; yet at the same time they love things that are old and familiar. For instance, out on the playground they never tire of playing Brownies and Fairies, Duck, Duck Goose, or other well-known games. For some, this interest span is short, and one must have several choices for that child; for others the interest will last a long time and activities can be more difficult and thoughtful.

### *Our Duties Are Myriad*

These are a few of the things we have learned in the classroom. Then there comes the realization of the many tasks that must be done in addition to just teaching.

We should be artists in a small way. There is nothing better for morale than a change in scenery—a bulletin board moved to another wall or tables shifted to new locations.

We must be a bookkeeper and a mathematician, keeping records and figuring reports, collecting milk money and attending to other money matters that come up.

We have become salesmen, pushing purchases of Christmas seals and war bonds and stamps and urging attendance at P.T.A. shows.

We have also become great patcher-uppers—of chairs, of clothes, of quarrels.

### *We Meet the Parents*

Once a month the P.T.A. holds its meeting to which come parents expecting to meet the new teacher and hear about their children's progress. A little of the fear we felt that first day comes to us on P.T.A. days, but pushing it back we go down to the room where the parents have gathered. Some are young and some are old, but all are pleasant. We have discovered that they are just a little afraid of us, too, though we can hardly believe it. However, it develops that they are all parents of the children who have had little or no trouble adjusting themselves. Then it is up to us to see, through home calls, those parents whose children need extra help. Here is where we learned about tact and diplomacy. It is during these calls, however, that we first began to realize (to our great surprise) how much respect is given to teachers and how much influence their word has. We found that the teacher who has the child's interest at heart need not fear these home calls. For of course the parent has that interest, too.

Another saying we have heard is that "the teacher is a public servant." We have found this true in several ways.

We were expected to give our time and service willingly during rationing. There was no doubt in the mind of the public but that we would do this, and teach besides. However, it turned out to be not such a chore as we had imagined. For the companionship of other workers and the friendly spirit of the people of the community who came for their ration books made it fun. We have found that the community has a respect for teachers, and we were surprised at the influence of the word of a teacher.

Besides the community being helpful, those who are in authority over us have aided us tremendously. Conferences with principal and supervisor help us see answers to our problems, not to mention showing us how human our "bosses" are. We have learned to accept constructive criticism gracefully because of the way it has been offered.

Yes, how we have learned. But we still have to learn. And how!

### **Summer Meeting**

Watch for an announcement of the program for the meeting of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development in Pittsburgh, Pa., on July 4, 1944. An early issue of *Educational Leadership* will carry details of the meeting, which is being held in connection with the annual business session of the National Education Association.

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