

Tools for Learning

SCHOOL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

N. L. ENGELHARDT

WHEN THE ARTIST pictures school children, he usually associates them with an article of essential supply or equipment. It may be a textbook slung in a bag over the shoulder, a ball being tossed in the air, a globe being scanned, or a light shedding its rays upon a desk. Schooling and needed material are invariably linked together. The significance of the role of equipment or supply in the educative process is, however, frequently overlooked. It has unfortunately not been given the study and research that would make for the greatest possible educational returns.

In the early American educational scene, equipment and supplies were necessarily meager. The roughly hewn desks of teacher and pupils, the slate and sponge, the water-bucket, the occasional map and the simple textbook constituted a large part of the available material. A spelling recitation was conducted by the teacher with text in

hand; the children stood in rows and spelled each other down. The slate sufficed for the arithmetic exercises. The reader and the geography text formed a large part of the library.

To be sure, the out-of-doors, with meadow and woods adjacent, was a laboratory in itself, where specimens and illustrative material abounded, and in the home there was always opportunity, as well as tools, for acquiring skills and getting work experience. The schools of today must provide much of the working paraphernalia which was to be found in homes and environment in the pastoral eras. They must also have the equipment and facilities which make possible ready adjustment to the constantly changing industrial, commercial, and technological patterns.

The school boys and girls of yesterday are today's soldiers and sailors, marines and seabees, Wacs and Waves, Spars and nurses. Their new services have a definite purpose and no expense is spared in providing the needed material both in the educational training and real service aspects of the work to be done. The emphasis is upon providing the right material at the right place with due regard to proper timing. The printing press has contributed the textbook as a tool of learning, but modern technological science will continue

The important role of supplies and equipment in a modern school is discussed in this month's "Tools for Learning" by N. L. Engelhardt of the New York City Schools. Recalling the evolution of supplies from schoolboy slates to modern films, Mr. Engelhardt emphasizes the significance for education of the speeded up teaching techniques of the armed services and the steady advance in scientific development of improved equipment for schools.

to make available machines and devices that will assuredly step-up the speed and volume of learning.

The American army of young learners is counted in the millions. They are the individuals of our democratic society who need specific adjustment to the varied work of the nation. A limited educational offering no longer suffices to meet their needs. The right kind of equipment and the essential supplies must be ready at the right time. This is the best criterion of good school supply management.

In the modern world, school problems become complex. A horse-and-buggy school supply program will not suffice for the era of the automobile, the plane, sulfa drugs, and electronics. Today the classroom itself takes on the atmosphere and character of the laboratory. It is equipped with the mechanical aids to learning.

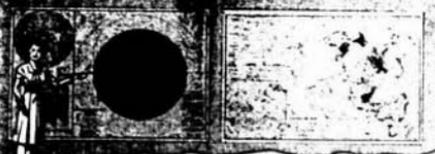
Supply and equipment management in this new setting assumes an importance far beyond any routine task. The vast number of items, their varied uses, and their definite educational implications require a masterful insight into the educational curriculum, a sympathetic understanding of educational aims, and the ability of a genius in getting the right materials to the right place at the proper time. In due time, school systems will have directors of educational material, whose functions will include exploration for new school materials, suggestion of fitness for specific educational purposes, experimentation for adaptability and for getting results, readaptation of materials, and elimination of the obsolescent and undesirable. They will concentrate upon ways and means of expediting learning

through the new technological devices. They will render a liaison service between the teacher in the classroom and the buyer in the central office.

The educational era of the postwar world will stress the significant values of the right kind of supplies and equipment for the educational program. American invention, in a few months of war, produced the new types of guns and planes and ships to lead to victory. That same inventive genius can be relied upon to continue to produce the kinds of supplies and equipment which will advance the educational program. Much of that material is already available and educators should assure themselves that they are using it to best advantage.

Next month Lois Coffey Mossman, specialist in teacher education in New Jersey, will discuss "Reading for Teachers."

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