

# We'd Like to See Some Changes

*Children suggest more democratic social life, better school busses, greater variety of courses—and flowers and pretty green grass in the schoolyard*

*On the whole, students are quicker to praise than to condemn their schools, but when asked specifically how the school might be improved they are ready with suggestions. The sincerity and earnestness with which they discuss the shortcomings of our educational system make their comments deserving of our thoughtful consideration. The following statements come from high school boys and girls.*

I HAVE attended schools in many communities, but I think this is the most extraordinary one. A most unusual social attitude prevails. Any person who has transferred from another city and who is a complete stranger here will notice the marked lack of sociability and friendliness. However, among the students who are acquainted with each other and who belong to the same clique, the social life is well-developed—almost too much so.

The extra-curricular activities afford a chance for one to become acquainted and to make friends, but only to a certain extent. There are many clubs which seem to be school activities, but which accept members on a majority vote only. Popularity is important and a deciding factor, and this is undoubtedly discouraging to a new student. Many of the activities are rather worthless insofar as being of any great value in the future.

The athletic activities for both boys and girls are above the average, and

ideal for anyone who is interested in the athletic activities only. The educational opportunities are above average in some departments and deplorable in others. If the excellent standards of some departments could be maintained by all, this would be a much better school.

- Naturally, I thought we would be given more information on the rules of the school so as to help us keep our records a straight hundred—well, anyway above ninety. And, of course, I expected demerits to be thrown out as if they were sticks of gum. Well, they are, but usually to good cause.

I don't think school regulations are explained fully enough to sophomores, and especially to those who enter during the semester. Many times we don't realize we are doing wrong and need help instead of demerits; the latter don't seem to do much good anyway.

- The trouble with most classes today is that they are much too large. This makes it hard to teach, and many times students of all grades are put together. I don't think this is wise because everyone wants to be with others his own age. If only students from one grade were put together they would feel free to express their opinions about things which they hesitate to bring up if there are older or younger classmates present.

The choice of courses is usually very successful, but it would be more so if

the students had more knowledge of the courses before selecting them. If there could be some way in which the teachers could get together with the students and try to give them some idea of what the course is going to be like, it would help the students a lot.

- I have been taught much, but I have not retained the knowledge. The reason for this is that the system of teaching is too easy. I have found school to be easy in my case, for I came here from another State and soon discovered the school I entered here was scholastically far behind the school I had previously attended.

The teachers in my new school were nice, friendly, and did not assign homework; therefore, I received the impression that I need not be concerned about studying. This impression has stayed with me since, and now I have found the things I should have learned have not remained with me. A few outstanding teachers, however, have been strict about homework, and I have retained their teachings.

After many years of observing, I am certain that the city's school system should be strengthened so the children will not have time to lose interest in studies. Furthermore, another reason why the system should be stiffened is to give every graduate from high school a better chance to enter college immediately without the necessity of attending junior college first in order to make up college-required subjects.

- One duty of the schools which has been carried out with varying degrees of success is seeing to it that everyone has an opportunity to learn no matter

how rich or poor he may be. The greatest differences in educational opportunities are between the rich and poor States and the Negro and white children. Many of the textbooks used by schools for Negro children are those that have been discarded by white children. They have little equipment and what they do have isn't in very good condition. The teachers are neither well-trained nor well-paid.

To provide white children with good schools and Negro children with poor ones is against the principles of democracy.

- In our core classes we are striving to make the rooms which we occupy more interesting and colorful by trimming and decorating them. Other classrooms could be made interesting in the same manner. When you have to spend an hour or more in a dull, dreary, uninteresting room, it doesn't give you much inspiration for working.

*When youngsters who attend schools which are poorly equipped make suggestions for improvement, they think in terms of a gymnasium, a home economics cottage, or more books for the library, whereas children from schools where such things are taken for granted discuss less tangible matters—ways of working, getting along with one another, and values of school living. The statements which follow are from boys and girls whose schools need "airtight busses," "larger chemistry labs," and "uniforms for the whole team."*

AFTER THIS WAR is over, everything will be modernized to a great extent. The schools will be more modern.

I visualize great changes for the high schools.

The transportation system should be better. There should be a bus for every route so that the children can come straight to school and leave when they are dismissed in the afternoon. By this method the children will have more time to help their parents. Millions of dollars would be saved each year in labor and transportation equipment.

The busses would be modern like the Greyhound. They should be airtight, with a good heating system to keep them warm and comfortable. A regular schedule of stops should be posted on the bus so the children can meet the bus at the same time each day. Shelters should be provided so the children will not have to stand in the rain or snow to wait for the bus.

The school buildings should be repaired and furnished with modern furniture. The school grounds should be larger and one of the most attractive places in the community. The school children should have respect for the school property and public property. The principal should have an office of his own and a secretary to keep his business straight, write letters, and file material.

Every school should have a desirable form of recreation, such as football, baseball, volleyball, golf, basketball, and tennis. Each school should have a swimming pool and a well-equipped gymnasium. There should be an instructor who has specialized in physical education.

The school rooms should be large enough to accommodate all the pupils who wish to take a subject. The library should have a full-time librarian, and

should have all the leading newspapers, magazines, and books that will interest the students.

- The agriculture department should have industrial arts classes. Each person should be taught more about machinery. Each person, when he graduates from high school, should be able to build any ordinary farm building and operate any farm machinery.

- In each high school the size of ours, a registered nurse should be employed full-time to attend to sick children. She should be furnished with all the necessary equipment and there should be an infirmary for sudden illnesses.

A greater variety of courses should be offered. For those with artistic ability, there should be an art course. A musical student may be instructed in both music and voice by a teacher trained in the subject. A dancing instructor should teach one how to make clumsy feet behave. A school band should be organized.

For the future secretary or stenographer, a commercial course should be offered. A course in etiquette would help a person improve his manners and a study of the Bible solve some problems that arise in ancient history and science. The books should be owned by the school board and loaned to the students each year.

- There should be a cafeteria, which offers a well-balanced meal prepared under the direction of a dietitian employed by the school board. Larger laboratories are essential so that each student can learn to work individually with the chemicals.

- The school should have a good football, baseball, and basketball team. The teams should have enough equipment so that all the players could have a uniform. The school would have a large stadium in which you could play football and baseball. It would have lights in the stadium for night games.

There should be a large gym to play basketball in and enough seats for everyone so you wouldn't have to stand.

*The kinds of suggestions which elementary school children make for improving their schools deal mostly with what we would call "the little things." But "the little things" may loom quite large in the eyes of the child concerned and may have implications fully as momentous as the more pretentious suggestions of their older brothers and sisters.*

FLOWERS AND pretty green grass on the grounds would make us have more pride and respect for the school.

- If we had see-saws, a sliding board, and swings, we wouldn't get hurt playing rough games.

- I wish that our school had an activity room.

- I wish my school had an out-door class everyday.

- I would like to have a picture show in our school.

- Our rooms should be larger. In the middle of this large room, we could have studies. On one end would be a place to play singing games. In another place we could have sewing machines for the girls and a corner where we could paint, or work with saw, hammer, and nails. (*Suggestions from fifth-graders.*)

- I like our lunchroom, but there are some things in it that could be improved.

Some of the boys sit with the girls and sometimes the children kick each other under the tables and it is very uncomfortable. (*Fifth Grade*)

- I think when we have recess the children should stay out of the hall and not hang around in the basements. (*Sixth Grade*)

- We could improve some if we could have hobby period. (*Sixth Grade*)

- I am very glad you will let us tell you how we like our school and how we can improve it. For at the school I went to in my hometown they did not give the children a chance to tell them how they felt about the school.

In that school the teacher would tell you what you could do and what you couldn't. And she made you do it or she would take you to the office and the principal would send you home with a note or she would talk to your mother. That was all right, but what I didn't like was that the teacher would rule you like Hitler. (*Sixth Grade*)

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