

Tools for Learning

TEACHING THE SKILLS

MILDRED ENGLISH

SKILLS HAVE EVER BEEN recognized as important aims of education. The skills were commonly thought of as reading, writing, and arithmetic, but as the purposes of education have been more broadly conceived the emphasis on skills has shifted to include more than the traditional three R's. Opinions differ widely as to the importance of instruction in skills and as to what procedures best foster their development. These differences often arise from conflicting ideas of values or aims and of the process of learning. The modern school, however, recognizes the value of skills taught as *children can use them in meaningful situations*.

The school, today, considers the development of skills in relation to living in the total school and community program. Skills considered important have been classified in a variety of ways, but always include more than the traditional three R's. English skills include reading, speaking, listening, experiences with books and magazines, library usage, techniques in choosing books, and basic map-reading, as well as grammar, spelling, and vocabulary.

In developing skills in mathematics, schools are able to build understandings, appreciations, and concepts through a study of problems that have significance for the pupil at the time.

Called for, also, are many bodily skills, from mastering the control of small muscles in writing and handling tools to the use of big muscles in physical education activities.

Social skills are important as children live and work in group and school activities.

Experiences that give needed practice in developing these skills should be carefully considered and planned for in the school program.

Arts and crafts, including music, calling for skills and techniques, should find a respectable place on the time schedule with adequate equipment and supplies for providing the necessary practice.

There are many good series of basal reading texts available, containing varied offerings of stories of high interest and literary merit. These provide related readiness materials and practice books containing exercises which are coordinated with the basal readers, designed to offer directed practice in reading for definite purposes. Teachers' manuals offer suggestions and directions for most effective use of the pupils' books and practice materials.

A well-planned reading program calls for materials and methods adjusted to the principles of readiness and child development; offers diversified reading activities to develop particular skills in both oral and silent reading; recognizes individual differences and provides for remedial work and for special interests; and is planned to develop and focus attention on contemporary living.

Textbooks, sets of readers, standard reference books should be supplemented by story books, pamphlets, and booklets. A good plan is to buy single copies of a number of new readers, science books, social studies books for the reading shelf or table. Appropriate fiction and non-fiction books designed for children¹ and children's magazines, *Wee Wisdom*, *Child Life*, *Story Parade*, *American Junior Red Cross News*, and a children's newspaper, such as *My Weekly Reader* should also form part of the equipment for

¹ See EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP for October 1944, "Reading for Children and Young People," by Nora E. Beust.

Discussing the place of skills in modern schools is Mildred English, superintendent of Peabody Training School at Georgia State College for Women in Milledgeville.

meeting the needs of children in the skills of reading and the use of books. A well-selected list of magazines for the high school library is equally important.

Pictures—still, projected, motion—maps and globes, games and puzzles, are also part of a well-equipped school. In developing listening skills a radio, a phonograph, and records and recordings are of great value, as are good readers and story-tellers.

Every school system should have an appropriation for instructional supplies. A good plan is to budget available funds on the basis of a given amount for each grade. This should be available to teachers for the purchase of materials. The needs of individual children should be kept in mind with materials selected to help each child take the next step in the development of his skills.

Among helpful books on the teaching of skills are the following:

1. Caswell, Hollis L.: *Education in the Elementary School*, New York, American Book Company, 1942. Chap. VIII.
2. Educational Playthings, Inc., 20 East Sixty-ninth Street, New York. *Handbook of Educational Work and Play Materials and Selected Books and Pictures for Young Children*.
3. Fallis, Edwina: *The Child and Things*, Yonkers-on-Hudson, N. Y., World Book Company, 1940.
4. Hildreth, Gertrude, and Wright, Josephine L.: *Helping Children to Read*, New York, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1940.
5. Lane, Robert Hill: *The Teacher in the Modern Elementary School*, New York, Houghton, Mifflin, 1941. Chap. X.
6. New York, State Department of Educa-

tion. *English Handbook for Teachers in Elementary Schools*, Albany, N. Y. 1940.

7. Browne, Sibyl, and others: *Art and Materials for the Schools*, Activities to Aid the War and the Peace, New York, Progressive Education Association, Service Center Booklet 2, 1943.
8. Maury School Staff, Richmond, Va.: *Teaching Reading in the Elementary School*, New York, Progressive Education Association, Service Center Pamphlet 2, 1941.
9. Industrial Arts Cooperative Service, 519 West 121st Street, New York.
10. Lamoreaux, Lillian, and Lee, Dorris May: *Learning to Read through Experience*, New York, D. Appleton-Century, 1943.
11. Leonard, J. Paul, and Eurich, Alvin C., editors: *An Evaluation of Modern Education*, New York, D. Appleton-Century, 1942. Chap. V.
12. American Library Association, Chicago, Ill.: *A Basic Book Collection for Elementary Grades*, 1943.
13. Miles, J. Robert: *Recordings for School Use*, New York, World Book Company, 1942.

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