

## Open the Doors to the Children

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OPEN THE DOORS to the children! The adage is old, so old that we take it for granted. Of course in enlightened America who would presume to think otherwise. We believe in public education! Then look to the doors of the school buildings. Do they remain closed until shortly before opening time? Are long queues of children waiting impatiently to enter? Are the rooms locked at noon? Where do the children go at the close of school? Have you never heard the admonition as active boys and girls are taken to the edge of the schoolground, "Go straight home now and don't return to the school yard"?

For many of the children there literally is no place to go except to the street, the store, the pool hall or back sandlot. The doors of America's schools have only been partially open, but the experiences of the war years have pushed them farther ajar and communities and educators must not allow the winds of postwar retrenchment to swing them to, again. Those doors must be pegged wide open to serve the needs of boys and girls of the nation.

The coming of war, disruption of family life, employment of mothers, and strains and stresses arising from congested living quarters have forced added numbers of children into the street without adequate supervision or care. America has always had children in

such circumstances, and foresighted communities, teachers, and administrators had made some progress in solving the problem even before the emergency period. Recreational and play programs had been organized. The story hour at the library, boy scouts and girl scouts, campfire girls, 4-H clubs, and nature clubs were all part of the effort to serve the needs of children.

The unprecedented numbers of children catapulted onto the community with the opening of the emergency called for a full-scale attack upon the problem. This problem had always existed but with the war became more acute. It was thus that systematic extended school service was begun.

Extended school service is an extension of the service of the school to the hours before and after the regular school schedule. It was conceived to supplement the home and provide in a measure the physical care, security, interested concern, and affection of the home. It also provided for mental growth and guided experiences in the social, creative, and service fields which had always been listed among the objectives of the school. In many places it was the result of the valiant efforts of several agencies in the community to meet the problem. The schools were the community agency best equipped for the service. True, in many cases they were already bursting at the casements because of overcrowded conditions, but nevertheless the schools had trained personnel, buildings, playgrounds, and equipment. So the schools were asked and cheerfully accepted the commission to use what facilities they had to protect and serve the children.

Schools which participated during the last several years in the development of programs have reached certain conclusions from their experiences. A few of the more general ones are enumerated here: Teachers employed for this service must not be heavily loaded. The teacher must have time to devote to individual children. There must be great freedom and flexibility in the program. Best results

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*Some of the expediencies of wartime education may be chalked up as permanent gains. We believe extended school services is one of them. In planning the postwar curriculum for your school, you may be facing the problem of how to continue a wide variety of services now that the emotional and financial impetus of a national emergency is past. Florence E. Beardsley, supervisor of elementary education in the Oregon Department of Education and chairman of an ASCD project committee dealing with extended school services, answers four questions which may be troubling you in this discussion of a broad program of school activities.*

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are obtained when children and teacher plan together. The atmosphere in which the program is carried on should be homelike, and there must be interesting things to do both for the group and the individual. A resting place for individuals is essential. Adequate space and storage facilities are paramount to the maintenance of a smoothly functioning program. Lack of these last two essentials was a great deterrent to development of successful programs in many places during the war years.

Because of pressure of new demands and the inadequacy of traditional procedures, the community and school have discovered new ways of cooperative effort in solving youth problems. Through these services the schools have developed an enlarged concept of responsibility for the child's continuous development. No more can we think of the child's life as separate compartments, one of which is an isolated school program. Rather it is one continuous experience in which the school has the opportunity to enrich the child's life. This can only be accomplished by establishing constant guidance involving cooperative school-home-community relationships.

Schools have also found it necessary to recognize definitely the responsibility of providing a continuous program in this service which is integrated with the rest of the school system. The extension of service is both upward and downward in age range. Thus the school which adequately serves the community will provide services for all the population from the nursery age through adult education.

During the emergency period the financial support of these school activities was largely through federal grants and private fees. The service has been limited to a particular class of children—those whose mothers worked—the objective being to release woman power for the war effort. Thus many communities have had a first class demonstration of supervised care for children. They are now aware that such care is of value to the community. The cost of such service, though relatively high, is of minor importance compared to the benefit to be derived by the children and the values to be gained by the community. Now, however, federal subsidies are being withdrawn and communities and adminis-

trators wishing to provide extended school service are faced with several fundamental problems: (1) What type of program shall be offered? (2) How can the program be financed? (3) What type of personnel is desirable in this program? (4) What space and equipment are needed?

#### What Type of Program Shall Be Offered?

The following concise statement is a valuable guide. It was prepared by a group of leaders at the U. S. Office of Education in 1944.

Educational programs should include a wide variety of services. For young children, these services should provide educational opportunities beyond those which are possible in the home to enrich their experience and encourage growth and development to the greatest possible degree. For the school-age group, these services should provide opportunities to engage in free and directed play, the arts and crafts, music, library, shop, summer camp, and any other type of recreational activities. For youth groups, these services should provide opportunities to improve health status and practices, to develop skills and abilities needed for chosen professions, to engage in the responsibilities of citizenship and public services, to pursue a hobby, and to engage in favorite forms of recreation. For adult groups, these services should provide opportunities to participate in civic discussions, to improve their abilities in relation to their trade or professions, to improve home conditions, to improve themselves as parents, and to discuss community affairs with their neighbors. These services should be State-wide and be offered to all groups whether in the cities or the rural areas.

#### How Can the Program Be Financed?

In many communities and states it will be necessary to formulate legislation to authorize the schools to offer a wider scope of educational activities. When considering the way in which financial support for the services is to be obtained the administrator and community are faced with several basic problems which may affect our whole school philosophy. Shall the services of the public schools continue to be free to all the children or shall fees be charged? Shall the services be available to all the children of all the people or be limited to those in certain economic situations?

Several states have recognized that there is

a state responsibility involved and have made funds and supervising service available for extended school service programs. In this way a combination of local and state support is achieved.

#### **What Type of Personnel Is Desirable in This Program?**

The teachers colleges and universities have recognized the need for a specialized kind of preparation for this work. They are offering work in child development and parental education and in craft work, rhythmic activities, club and hobby pursuits, visual aids, and other projects which form the basis for quiet and lively play activities. The people so trained are equipped to guide children through experiences and experiments which will aid them to achieve satisfactory social and civic purposes, develop competency in making choices, increase the ability to discover the satisfaction of self-direction, and accept and recognize their own individual limitations.

#### **What Space and Equipment Are Needed?**

Programs that have obtained desirable objectives have been able to provide a large outdoor space for play, having both sunshine and shade, as well as large muscle-building play equipment, an indoor space for play, a

work area for construction purposes and homemaking tasks, a rest area, storage space for tools and equipment, and use of the lunchroom, library, dramatic, and musical facilities of the school.

In this postwar era a new realization of the value of public education is spreading throughout America. Large amounts of money for the construction of postwar school buildings have been put aside and will soon be used to provide quarters for the educational program of the future. As those programs are planned it is evident that America's educators are enlarging their perspective of educational service. Forward-looking administrators see a responsibility and opportunity to work with community agencies to serve the youth of our land and are providing adequate quarters for this service.

In this era the school is a community institution serving a wide variety of community needs and programs. Civic groups and thoughtful citizens are beginning to see that it is neither efficient, economical administration nor sound community planning to provide expensive school facilities and keep them closed for a large portion of the day.

*Let's open the doors of the schools* that citizens, parents, teachers, and children may work together to make democratic action a living force in the community.



### **ASCD Committee to Review Research Articles**

B. Othanel Smith, professor of education at the University of Illinois in Urbana, has accepted the chairmanship of a new ASCD committee which will collect and evaluate research articles dealing with supervision and curriculum development.

Members to serve on the committee are being selected to give representation to all parts of the country. Articles of a research nature will be gathered by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and turned over to the committee for review. The committee will evaluate and make final selection of articles for eventual publication. Individuals are invited to submit manuscripts for consideration. They should be sent directly to Mr. Smith.

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