

Open All Day, All Year

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IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT that you are visiting the All-Day Neighborhood School in Harlem. To reach P.S. 194 you pass through streets lined solidly with five-story tenements. The butcher, the baker, the local storekeepers line the avenues at street level. You come to a beautiful new school building and in it—as in the neighborhood around—you see practically no white people, for all save the school staff are Negro.

In the school you are impressed by the happy, free atmosphere. The children are friendly with one another and the teacher is a helpful friend of all. They are all busy working and playing—and their work and play are very real for they are the outgrowths of some experiences the children have had. They have explored their neighborhood, they have studied family life, they have provided useful services as a group to the school community. You might see boys and girls rehearsing a play dramatizing some community need to present on the radio or before a neighborhood group. Perhaps you see them entertaining other children from public and private schools in more privileged neighborhoods. You hear frank, intelligent discussions of prejudice and the respect one owes persons regardless of race, creed, or social position. The children have learned much of the contribution of the Negro to American civilization. You find parents in the school, some as visitors, some as helpers, and some as participants in study groups. You see a painter, a poet, a dancer, or a merchant

of the neighborhood who has come to share his skills with the youngsters who are eager to learn.

At 3 o'clock when the recreation program begins you hardly notice the change, for the atmosphere in the recreation center is similar to that in the day school. It is free and friendly and the children carry on their work and play informally with alert interest. Opportunity to use energies, abilities, interests constructively is provided in the programs. Not all the children remain for the recreation program, as the "Clubs" are restricted to a membership of twenty-five. All of the children cannot be served in the Clubs but it is thought better to provide an adequate program for the children of working mothers and to offer the traditional type of recreation program to the others. The playgrounds under the supervision of the 3-to-10 o'clock staff offer recreational opportunities to the rest of the school population.

Perhaps on the day you visit, the local committee has its meeting and representatives of health and welfare agencies, churches, leading merchants, professional and newspaper people, parents, and teachers discuss some needed service to the community. Or you might see teachers meeting with the social worker or psychiatrist or a small group of teachers just gathered together to continue evaluation of the curriculum or exchange views. Or possibly you see a group of teachers, parents, and children meeting together to plan a festival or a rummage sale to raise money for the summer program. You might even see a moving picture being run for the benefit of the camp fund so that more children can be sent by the school to some agency camp.

A School System Experiments

Educational leaders are hopeful that out of these programs will develop the practice of neighbors meeting together to plan and to act for their improvement. Is it possible that they will look to their schools to educate them and their children to a better life?

Chief concern of planners in many communities today is what happens to children and youth after school hours. An outstanding example of neighborhood action to provide stimulating work and play after 3 o'clock, as well as before, is the neighborhood school program of New York City. Describing this integrated school-community project is Clara F. Blitzer, chairman, Committee of the Public Education Association for the All-Day Neighborhood Schools of the New York City Board of Education.

The school which you have visited is the outgrowth of a unique experiment in after-school recreation. It is unique because educational insights gained in the past fifty years have been employed throughout the program. But the recreation program was only a beginning—out of it grew the All-Day Neighborhood School Demonstration which included the day school and work with the community. The recreation program was integrated with the education in the day school where enriched curriculums as well as real work experiences and more play were provided; there were parent-education programs and work with neighborhood groups. The Demonstration served to show not only what needed to be done but the kind of staff that is required and methods that could be employed to help teachers carry out the program.

Recognizing that public schools must take increasing responsibility for influencing all the factors that affect the life of the child, the Board of Education of the City of New York launched its experiment in all-day schools in 1936. The program developed as a joint venture of the Board of Education and the Public Education Association, a citizens' group concerned with the improvement of education in New York City. The Public Education Association set up a sub-committee which provided a staff to guide the work. The success of the program is due largely to the deep insight and patience of the staff and in particular of its director. The three-year demonstration was conducted in two schools—one in Chelsea (P.S. 33), the other in Harlem (P.S. 194). The Demonstration came to an end in June 1945, and the Board of Education decided to take over the work and extend it to two other schools—P.S. 25 and P.S. 63, both in the Bronx. All of the schools are in "difficult" areas—each has about a thousand children in it. The Demonstration clearly proved that a much larger staff is needed if the kindergarten-to-6-B years—the basis of a child's formal education—are to meet the needs of each child as a member of his community.

A Staff to Handle the Job

In each of the schools, in addition to the usual assignment of administrative staff and classroom teachers, the Board of Education

has provided seven licensed teachers on a 10:40-to-5 o'clock schedule. Six of these serve as "group teachers," who work with classroom teachers to individualize instruction and enrich the curriculum in the day school and who lead the six clubs in the afternoon recreation program. The seventh teacher is in charge of the extended program. A social worker and an additional clerk have been added to each school. One school has a parent educator paid for by a committee of local citizens organized by the school, another has a human relations counselor who works with several schools in the neighborhood to improve race relations, and an O.T.P. (Other Teacher Provided) to work with the parents of the school. Another of the All-Day Neighborhood Schools had, during the last year of the Demonstration, a Community Worker and a staff of three people on a 3-to-10 o'clock schedule who worked with adolescents and adults in the neighborhood. In each school the additional staff represents a 25 per cent to 40 per cent increase in the number usually assigned to an elementary school.

Not only has the staff had to be augmented but supplies and equipment for carrying on the program have had to be increased. Here again the community has supplemented the additional funds provided by the Board of Education when they were needed.

If you were to visit each of these schools, you would be impressed by the difference in their surroundings. You would begin to ask yourself, Where do the children come from? Where are they going? What else besides the school is educating them? It is only after the school has some idea of the answer to these questions that it can begin to build programs to meet the needs of the community in which it is set.

All-day schools cost money, for a larger staff is required to provide the many services. We shall have to decide to meet these costs in the schools of tomorrow. If we are serious about the implications of One World, if we acknowledge that education is the indispensable tool in obtaining it, if we believe in the power of free men to work out their own destiny, some way must be found to finance schools like these for all the children. For we do not lack the vision, the materials, nor the men and women to do the work.

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