It is not unreasonable to assume that the concern which any teacher shows for the needs and interests of each individual with whom she works bears a direct relationship to the freedom with which that teacher herself operates as an individual in this modern world. Neither is it presumptuous to believe that a concern for individuals can be learned—learned as one is given an opportunity to see all of the varied characteristics of an individual personality and the complex environment in which that person exists. A pre-service experience which is concerned with both the individual needs of future teachers and their insight into the total living of children is described by Wilbur D. West, professor of education, Western Michigan College of Education, and director of Clear Lake Camp. He recommends that—

**Teachers Go Camping**

Wilbur D. West

DO TEACHERS-IN-PREPARATION have adequate opportunity to learn to know and understand children?

Have we given our teachers-in-service, even our specialists in guidance, sufficient knowledge of child nature and behavior?

A ready and emphatic answer to the above questions by many educators would probably be: “They should!” and “We have!” They attend theory courses in such subjects as child psychology, educational psychology, educational sociology, and human growth and development! They observe teachers in action! They try supervised practice teaching! They teach!

We have turned out scads of young teachers believing that the program as described has given them an understanding of children in action. But what opportunity have they been given, as a part of their pre-service training, for direct contact with small groups of youngsters, under non-teaching relationships? The usual teacher-preparation program provides little opportunity and no credit for such experiences.

It is possible that the teacher-in-preparation may work with children in the group work of outside agencies. Most students find college life too full for such extra-curricular side paths. Beginning teachers and the large majority of the more mature are usually not parents and have raised no children. A teacher of eight years experience, after two days in camp, made the statement: “I never realized that children had so much energy!” The usual classroom is a non-buoyant situation; childish energy remains potential. In the December issue of the University of Michigan School of Education Bulletin, Harlan C. Koch pleads for the retention of married teachers because they tend to have “well-poised, rounded personalities.” It is impossible to give every teacher a normal marriage experience. School camping provides the nearest substitute parent-child relationship.

**The Venture**

Western Michigan College of Education at Kalamazoo is completing the first year of an experiment designed to give future teachers an experience in living with children in a non-teaching relationship. Generous assistance from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek has made it possible to set up a five-year experiment at Clear Lake Camp, an all-year camp located thirty miles from the college campus, and to study the feasibility of School Camping and Outdoor Education as an extension of the public school curriculum and of the training of teachers. It has been possible to inaugurate a school camping and outdoor education program and to use the program as a part of the practice-teaching preparation of future teachers. The students act as counselors for groups of children in the close association of a year-round camping program.

Recently educators have been considering carefully the implications of educational camping and outdoor education as extensions of the public school curriculum.
as presented by Dr. Lloyd B. Sharp, Director of Life Camps, Inc., suggests that those things which can best be learned within the classroom should be learned there. Those things which can best be learned through direct experience dealing with raw materials in life situations outside the classroom should be learned there. School camping provides for outdoor education in an area which affords materials not found in the usual school environment and allows for experiences in social living which can't be secured in a classroom or on a field trip.

Children Learn in Camps

In the school camping program as it has operated at Clear Lake Camp for the last year, children from cooperating public schools in neighboring communities spend two-week periods at camp. Two classes with their teachers come for each period. In keeping with the above stated outdoor education principles, the attempt is made to teach those elements of the curriculum which can be better learned at camp than in the school environment. In addition, activities are provided which, though not closely related to the traditional school curriculum, are sources of education in such areas as work experience, health and safety, self-occupation, spiritual growth, and social living.

Although the recreational element permeates the school camping program and the traditional formalism of school is prevented from creeping into the two weeks at camp, the overall emphasis is educational. A pre-camp program in the school prepares the children for the group living of camp. Under the supervision and with the suggestions of a highly trained camp staff, the campers, visiting teachers and college students plan and carry through the activities of the two weeks. Formal classes are not held. However, improvement in the academic subjects—spelling, arithmetic, writing, reading, etc.—is apt to result because there is a real need for a better ability in some area of camp living.

Teachers Become Counselors

Senior students, as a part of their practice or supervised-teaching are given the opportunity to spend one week in the camping program. Starting with the fall semester of 1946, students will be permitted to participate for a two-week period. The experiment is set up on a voluntary basis with each college student paying a nominal fee for board, linen and transportation. It may be a commentary upon the nature of the program or a validation of the need felt by the college students for the experience that, at the end of the first year of operation, the camp finds it necessary to limit student participation.

Most college students have had no previous camp counseling experience and practically none have attended a school camp. To overcome this lack of experience and to prepare the student to take an active role in the planning and carrying out of the camping program, pre-camp training courses are held. The student anticipating a school camping experience is expected to attend at least one of these short courses.

Teachers in service who plan for outdoor education or school camping programs with their children also need training in camp living. In order to prepare such teachers, a summer workshop is held at the camp. Either graduate or undergraduate credit may be secured in school camping and outdoor education and in related courses in education, physical education, nature study and child psychology. A summer laboratory camp provides living experiences with children.

The Results

The values derived by the college teacher-training student from such a program are largely subjective, the following three are among the more observable.

Round-the-Clock Living

for Year-Round Knowledge

1. The student lives with a small group of children twenty-four hours a day for a week. Starting with the fall semester of 1946, the time will be extended to two weeks. This experience is as near a parent-child relationship as it is possible for a teacher-training institution to give students. A two-week period hastily considered seems too short to be worth the effort. However, if broken down statistically and experientially, one is somewhat amazed at its possibilities.

The student, as counselor for six campers,
starts the day with them when they arise at seven and works with them—frequently trailing—through dressing, meals, housekeeping tasks, community activities (bank, store, post office, newspaper and log, planning and carrying through of special programs), small group participation or interest groups (nature exploration, arts and crafts, campcraft and woodcraft, trips, hikes and games), quiet hour, and on until they are showered and tucked in for the night.

Broken down into actual hours of association, the two-week period, which actually begins at four o'clock on Sunday afternoon and terminates at two o'clock a week from the following Friday, includes a total of 310 hours. Approximately 120 hours of this is sleeping time, though it should be pointed out that the student is responsible for the camper during sleeping time and must function in cases of homesickness, loneliness, bedwetting, indigestion, etc. After removal of the sleeping time, the remaining 190 hours are the equivalent of very nearly two months of school attendance. The fact should be stressed heavily that this is in no way comparable to school experiences either in supervised teaching or in teaching because the counselor-camper ratio is one to six whereas the usual teacher-pupil ratio is at least one to thirty.

Camp living removes the restricting influence of the school, breaks down the teacher-pupil barrier and forces upon the student-counselor or teacher-counselor a pattern of living democratically conceived in which there is a maximum of opportunity for control through those intangibles evident in a well-integrated and wholesome personality and a minimum of need for control through autocratic strictures. This experience in total group living gives teachers-in-preparation an opportunity:

**fears vanish**

a. To eliminate the fear of children and of the teaching situation. Most beginning teachers, and probably many experienced ones, are literally “scared to death” of the children. Or more accurately, afraid that they will fail, that the children will refuse to obey, or that they will have little control, or complete loss of it. Students report that such fear vanishes in the close association of the camp living. Two weeks is not long enough for the development of ability to work easily with children, but a different attitude develops toward them. They cease to be little fiends bent on deviltry and become individuals who are interesting, at times exciting, and capable of being progressively understood. This result, in itself, from the standpoint of the college student justifies the experiment.

**decisions take form**

b. To decide whether they are interested in children and have a liking for them; whether they like working with children and living with them. The student has a better basis for deciding whether he wishes to spend a portion or all of his life in the teaching profession. The need for some such experience earlier than the senior year of teacher preparation is self evident. Administrative difficulties have so far prevented an earlier camp session though thought is being given to the possibility of its inauguration. One such opportunity is present in the summer workshops to which a student is eligible after the first college year.

**interests are defined**

c. To check their child level interest, that is, students must decide whether they wish to teach at the elementary or the secondary level. In some cases the nature of their subject-matter interest restricts the area for them. In instances which are not so affected, upon what basis shall the student hazard a choice? That there is no adequate criteria is evidenced by the fact that two senior student-counselors, after their camping experience, changed from the secondary to the later elementary level. Others indicated that they are not sure of their choice but have had no means for making a definite decision.

**New Techniques Needed**

2. A second value derived by the student who goes to a school camp as a counselor is the chance to learn about outdoor education. We are becoming aware that much that has been taken into the classroom might be easier and better learned outdoors. Many teachers, enthusiastic for the outdoors and its possibilities, have found, to their chagrin, that working with children outside the classroom
is different from working with them inside the school building.

The college student-counselor has an opportunity, especially through the summer workshops and pre-camp training courses, to develop skill in the educational areas of the out-of-doors. He can watch the experienced classroom teacher attempt to adjust to the expanded environment. He can observe and work with the experienced outdoor educator and most important of all, he can work with a small group of campers at some school camping project.

**Personal Relationships Flourish**

3. A third though none the less important effect of this 'teacher-training student in a school camp' experience is the close personal relationship with the camp staff. Student-faculty barriers which seem inevitable in the usual college situation disappear in camp living. There are two distinct advantages to the student-counselor in this informal student-staff relationship.

- **failure can stimulate**
  
  a. Because grades are not loafing in the offering, the student is willing to try that which may be new. The staff is ever-present for consultation and to rescue an abortive attempt. There is no fear of failure. Failure, divorced from its social and professional consequences, becomes a learning situation for analysis and study. It may stimulate an experimental approach allowing for an evaluation of what has been done and a zest for the new and untried. There is little feeling of being supervised. The group is working together in an activity of mutual interest and for a common purpose. There is a give and take of banter, a free questioning of purpose and procedure, and a feeling that criticism is never petty but rather given in the spirit of constructive, friendly assistance.

  b. The informal faculty-student bond is in reality "camaraderie", a learning situation at its best. Not only is it possible for the faculty to discuss such problems as the philosophy of education and of camping, teaching methods, camping skills, but with equal readiness the student accepts suggestions regarding the personal qualifications of a teacher, dress, voice, and social relationships. The Dean of Women enthusiastically reports that the camp staff has been able to "get under the skin" of some unconventional and socially nonconforming students with resulting changes of behavior. It is not to be assumed that the camp atmosphere is alone responsible for such changes. It is an effective medium in which a group of truly interested, socially conscious educators may work what seem to be near miracles. The Clear Lake Camp staff is a part of the faculty of Western Michigan College of Education. They are mature persons holding Master's degrees or higher who have had extensive experience in education and are proficient in camping skills and knowledge.

  The experiment is still in too youthful a stage for an evaluation of its worth as a teacher-training device. Such an evaluation must come from the students participating in it and from the superintendents who will have the opportunity to compare teachers with a school camp counseling experience against those without such training.

---

**IT IS WITH SINCERE regret that we announce the resignation of Mrs. Louise C. McCue, who has served with such credit as Assistant Editor of Educational Leadership. However, with the culmination of the war, Mrs. McCue is returning to her home in Arkansas. It has been said that all good things must come to an end, but in regard to her affiliation with us, we wish it were not so! Her work on the Journal has set a standard which we shall try to maintain in the publications that follow. Mrs. Elinor Cahill, formerly Circulation Assistant, replaces Mrs. McCue.**

_March 1946_