

Guidance in the Secondary School

Education needs improved surroundings

Environment Aids Learning

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"WHAT PROFIT is there in an education that interests only for accuracy, for technical ability, for correct answers? The end of life is that men may live in love and service, in appreciation and tolerance. It should be crystal clear to us that through education, as a man increases his ability to create and earn, in like proportion he should be obligated to increase his social understandings. Otherwise, we must expect the inevitable disintegration and chaos."¹

Education cannot be divided into two separate categories, one relating to "general education" and the other relating, I suppose, to vocational education, using the term in its broadest sense. Life is a whole process. The school needs to be a laboratory—an environment—in which a wealth of educational experiences can be had. In one sense, no educational experience is "general." Each is specific, built on previous experiences, modifying and extending them. "Verbal teaching for democracy is futile."² Pupils need to be involved in

meaningful activities if we are to produce citizens equal to our fast-moving, individualistic, democratic society.

"General education" should not be planned to end with the twelfth year or any other year. As a person's ability to solve problems and give leadership increases, his need for more "general education" increases in like ratio. It is not enough that an engineer acquire the ability to design; he must also learn to serve society intelligently. Thus we see that "general education" is a sort of futile gesture, unless it is applied to real situations. It has to get into a man's life—his work. It has to become his morals, his ethics, his honesty, his social understanding. To do this, it must be applied in real situations to real problems as the pupil makes progress. Otherwise, "general education" may express itself as "Sunday manners" donned once a week as a sort of atonement for the real life of the individual during the balance of the week.

More Doing—Less Talking

If such a "general education" is to become an actuality in a secondary school, more than talking and mouthing educational terminology is necessary. Five parties must understand and approve what is being done—the public, the school board, the administration, the teachers, and the pupils. Some successful campaigns for a change have often followed a pattern somewhat as follows:

1. The superintendent presents his ideas to the school board.
2. He asks and secures permission to discuss the issues involved with his teachers and with the public.
3. He does this, and at a reasonable time

¹ Anon.

² Baker Brownell in *New Schools for a New Culture*, Harper's, 1943, P. ix.

Education is not "Sunday manners" to be donned once a week—it is continuous, and should have the surroundings which will give the student the impetus to an active attitude toward learning rather than a quiescent one. Valuable suggestions for the betterment of secondary schools are offered here by Andrew P. Hill, superintendent of schools, Stockton, California, who stresses the fact that programs which plan for good school environment make noteworthy contributions to well-balanced learning processes.

thereafter, takes group polls of opinion.

4. He asks for a citizen's advisory committee, and permission to hold a series of meetings with this group and the school board. To them he presents simplified factual research data about the school system, and discusses with them how education can be improved. This "how" is the result of his teachers, staff, and public meetings and polls, it is specific and minimum in character, and can be controlled scientifically by research methods.

Suggested Planning

If his program is adopted, there are a number of steps that the school board must take:

1. Establish a teachers' professional library and workroom.
2. Professionally staff the school library, and provide it adequately with books, magazines, and seats. (Seats 10 per cent of enrollment).
3. Authorize a community survey to study vocational opportunities, opportunities for community service, places where information and data can be had.
4. Establish a guidance-research-curriculum development office, which can study pupil needs and pupil progress, serve teachers, help with curriculum work, and make changes in subject-matter offerings as the need is revealed.
5. Provide some means whereby teachers can contribute throughout the school year to curriculum building. (A half-time unassigned teacher in a thousand-pupil school can be assigned to do curriculum work, or relieve teachers who are ready to make some specific contribution).
6. Recognize the need for a four-to six-weeks summer workshop, and make some token payment toward the expenses of participating teachers.

Such action indicates that the school board has adopted policies encouraging the professional development of teachers, the relating of education to life, and the providing of library services that permit actual study and research.

Now it is time for the program to really get started. Items one and two above, can be put into operation in short order. But item

three is a big order. All teachers should participate in the survey. Its practical usefulness to general education in helping to make many things real and specific, is almost endless.

Vocational Education Aids Versatility

Only one aspect of the survey is considered in detail here—that of vocational opportunity. Guidance can't really function until you have a wealth of choices for pupils. For a number of reasons, a strong vocational program is necessary if you would have a strong "general education" program. (1) By giving many pupils a subject where they can succeed, it brings self-respect and personal dignity and satisfaction. It adds interest and zest. It makes the rest of the school day bearable. (2) The interest engendered by vocational education often leads to awakened interests in some phases of general education. An "electric's" major becomes interested in algebra or physics; a machinist in mathematical ratios or metallurgy. This process also reverses itself. A study of "family life" is actually vocational for homemaking majors, architects (home planners), and social workers. A study of conservation of forests is vocational for foresters, and of land, for farmers and farm agents. These pupils bring their developed interests into the "general education" area. (3) A strong vocational education program is essential to a real program of "general education" because it brings and keeps together for several years, all of the youth of the community—a typical cross-section of democratic society. The social and governmental problems to be met in class and in student government in this kind of a school are real and practical.

Some Do's and Don'ts

The establishment of the guidance-research-curriculum development service in each school is also a matter of first significance. Working directly under the head of this service, should be the "core" or guidance teachers. These might have their pupils three hours per day on the seventh- and eight-grade levels, two hours daily on the ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grade levels, one hour a day on the twelfth- and thirteenth-grade levels, and twice weekly on the fourteenth-grade level.

The "guidance" office should contain all

pupil records, and four or five desks at which teachers could work. There should be consultation offices where teacher, pupil, and parent can meet. There should be a weekly "core" teachers' meeting, at which problems should be discussed, curriculum work laid out, testing and evaluating planned, and once or twice a year, a number of meetings should be devoted to vocational guidance.

In those high schools which have a registrar, it would be wise to eliminate the position, and make that function clerical under the head of a guidance officer. You need records, but you don't need a record keeper who is so divorced from the educative forces that he proves to be a hindrance rather than an aid in making educational adjustments.

The limitations of this article do not permit the complete development of typical administrative changes any further. But undoubtedly, the reader can imagine the opportunity for genuine and honest "general education" which such a setup would give and continue in plans from there. The core curriculum is its content, and its spelling, grammar composition, and literature grow out of the core curriculum. The library is being used intensively. Pupils are reading more and more widely. After two years in this kind of a program, a teacher testified: "There is no doubt but what our pupils can look up facts and organize them better than they could under our traditional program. More pupils do sustained work. The amount of creative writing has increased. In reading speed and comprehension, as measured by standardized tests, they are about one and one-half grade placements ahead of our former pupils."

The Proper Place at the Proper Time

But such a program of "general education" in secondary schools cannot be truly effective without a physical environment which can be adapted to its needs. Already we have indicated the need for a real school library, a teachers' workroom and professional li-

brary, and a "Guidance Office" where program or schedule making and record-keeping are subordinated to the educative forces.

The following suggestions are also pertinent:

Do not plan combination uses of rooms, except as a last resort.

If the auditorium stage is a part of the gymnasium, dramatic activities will be crowded out. Use lighter or less costly construction materials and get unimpeded use of your rooms.

Core rooms are often more useful when planned in pairs, one to best accommodate class dramatics, and the other to permit simple demonstrations in science.

If you want to get efficient use of your school day, keep your school plant compact. Spread-eagle schemes increase the exchange time between periods often by as much as twenty minutes a day; they increase maintenance and operation costs, and they add to disciplinary problems.

Make school shops adequate. The average shop requires a space approximating 50 by 80 feet, and it can't be successfully crowded under a classroom span.

Include a good health department. Don't give academic lip service to "general education"; prepare to put it into practice in your school.

For like reasons, provide adequate offices for the student body and the school paper.

Every school needs a good conference room with appropriate furniture for pupil, faculty, and pupil-faculty meetings, parent-teacher meetings, neighborhood club meetings, and school-neighborhood conferences.

I have not meant to imply that there may be only one pattern by which "general education" can be adequately provided for. Let the reader take any idea or ideas he may find here, and build his own ideas into a reality. "He that copyeth is lost; but he who thinketh in his own right, no matter how feeble his candle burneth, walketh in the sunlight of achievement."

TURN TO PAGE 399 for information concerning reprints of Dr. Goodwin Watson's address, *The Emerging Social Setting for Education*, which will soon be available from this office.

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