

Balance in High School Living

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"Can youth achieve balanced living in the secondary schools?" This question should elicit an unqualified affirmative, but as T. D. Rice, coordinator of instruction, Oklahoma City Public Schools, points out, there are still many deterrents to the attainment of this objective. However, he does encourage us with his descriptions of the programs carried through in some of the schools which have recognized this problem, and are anxious for its solution.

IN VIEW of prevailing practice in secondary schools, it might be possible to entitle this article "Balanced Living For Youth *versus* The Secondary School." There is evidence that these practices often place youth in a situation in which they have little opportunity to live balanced lives.

Period by period scheduling which forces youth to stop thinking about a subject or a problem at the end of forty-five minutes, move to another room and engage in a different activity in a different environment with a different dominating personality over them.

The academic pattern of the school which is determined by departmental planning. Rarely does a secondary school faculty give attention to what happens to a given group of youngsters throughout the *entire* day. Rather the experiences of youth are determined vertically by the scope of the curricular offering in each department.

The program which is judged as satisfactory in terms of the degree of achievement in departmental and subject mastery standards. The goals of adjustment and effective human association are relegated to the "extra curricular."

Life for youth beginning between periods, in activity periods, and after school. The student councils, pep squads, the athletic events, and special hobby organizations are recognized as significant but do not have a curricular status.

These are but a few of the practices which prevent youth from having opportunity to live in a balanced way in the secondary school. The purpose here

is to examine evidences now existent in greater or lesser degree in the secondary schools to identify promising clues relative to provision for balanced living.

It would be unwise to proceed into such an analysis without further attention to what is here meant by the term "balanced living." It would probably be agreed that balanced, purposeful living is characterized by physical and mental health which is best developed in situations in which work is not seen on one hand as a grim, relentless experience, and play on the other as a hysterical and neurotic release. By balanced living we mean that work has the elements of interest, exploration, and play, and that play has the elements of creative interaction. Balanced living would permit chums to be chums in a school program and to function within commonly accepted values in the social pattern. It would permit boys to meet girls normally and to have opportunity for common social interaction to the extent that distortion has a minimum chance of arising. It would enable youth and adults, skilled and unskilled, mature and immature, to join in mutual exploration and experience the satisfaction of mutual anxieties and achievement.

Carried over into school life, how would such a program appear?

The teachers, themselves, should reflect easy interaction among each other and a diversification of interests with regard to recreation and work.

Such teachers should systematically and periodically canvass the "needs" of youth. A check list prepared in the school or taken from some other source such as the *Problem Check List* or the *Interest Index* provides means whereby teachers could identify some of the needs of youth.¹

There should be an atmosphere conducive to continual student-teacher planning. Such an atmosphere might be generated in the school programs in which there is a representative student council which is expected to plan with teachers. Certainly it should arise in programs in which classroom pupil-teacher planning obtains.

The school schedule should reveal attention to provision for:

Continuity of personnel. This means that while the pupil-teacher ratio may have to remain too high, still the principal could reduce by one-third to one-half the number of "different" students a teacher would meet each day. Block scheduling is one of the ways being used to achieve this purpose.

Continuity for the purpose of establishing learning relationships. The period by period sampling of many subject fields should give way insofar as possible to continuity of learning experience, to block scheduling, and to provision for work experience and other active and participating procedures.

What are some school programs in which, to a degree at least, the foregoing criteria are being met? Based on a study of secondary school programs in which a high degree of cooperative teacher planning has been reported, some evidence is available.² Of two hundred and eighty-five schools participating in the study, more than forty per cent reported some form of core or block

¹ *Problem Check List*—High School Level: First Edition: March 1, 1940, Ross L. Mooney, Bureau of Educational Research, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. *Interest Index* (8,2a) Progressive Education Association, School of Education, University of Chicago.

² T. D. Rice, *Cooperative Planning and Teaching in Curricular Activities in Secondary Schools*, Unpublished manuscript, Deering Library, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois: 1943.

schedule. In general, the study showed that:

The degree of teacher participation in planning their work was greatest in those schools which might be characterized as community-oriented schools.

Next greatest in the amount of teacher participation were those school programs in which there was a high degree of grade-level planning.

The double period program in which two teachers worked for some part of the day revealed the next greatest amount of cooperative teacher planning. It was evident from the reports that in the foregoing forms of secondary school programs the amount of teacher and student participation was greater than that which appeared in schools which reported only departmental organization.

Report from Denby High School

Double period work was being carried on by social studies and science teachers in Denby High School, Detroit, Michigan.

One science teacher and one social studies teacher plan all work together, both are present together at all times with class, each functioning according to his special capacity—take up during term Housing, Race, Social Security—science teacher largely responsible for factual matters, social studies teacher for social implications—students help in planning, making decisions, choose own fields of interest. We feel the chief merit is improved way of working together, teachers with teachers, students with students, students with teachers.

A teacher working with those groups characterized the benefits for students by the following four points:

1. Because of the double class period it is possible to take many trips in the neighborhood.
2. The teacher is not a "tin god." The teachers frequently disagree and have occasionally had a debate for the benefit of the class. The class sees how two people may disagree intelligently, and how the basic points of disagreement are found.
3. Each teacher is an expert in a field. The students learn how to use an expert, and

that an expert in one field is not necessarily an expert in another.

4. Class work is richer because the teacher's backgrounds supplement each other making possible a wider range of reference materials, speakers, etc., than would be otherwise possible.

Cooperative planning by teachers made possible further inter-class activities. "In Denby High School students in ten core groups in the ninth grade were represented in an inter-core council. These representatives served as a clearing house in which the students exchanged experiences of what was being done in the groups. They undertook as one project to explore and recommend procedures which might be used to supplement letter grades, the only form of reporting to parents in the program.

Denver Students Render Service

An inter-core group of students in East High School, Denver, Colorado, met weekly with teachers to plan their schedule. The students in the core classes in this school formed interest groups which met twice weekly in the core periods. One of these groups took over the project of producing a film on "Food" for the American Council on Education. Another of these groups wrote a diary of their first year's experience in core work, which was printed by the school system for general distribution."³

Evidence Comes From Virginia

Some increased evidence of enriched classroom and school activities may be cited from these grade level programs. In one Virginia high school, considerable resources were utilized by teachers

who plan together some of the evidences of these extended resources are as follows:

Boys taking agriculture have frequently enriched our classroom discussions when we were studying agricultural problems and situations by often telling us about their field trips, experiences, and study under the agriculture teacher.

Much of our discussion for the year hinged around food and preservation of foods. Our home economics teacher aided us immensely by giving us two lectures and furnishing us with a book-list to use in finding material for study. Lately, noticing the children's interest in fixing each other's hair, face powdering, etc., we have begun the study of beauty culture, beauticians, and barbers. In this study, many books loaned to us or recommended to us by our principal, who also teaches the upper classes social studies and current social problems, have proved valuable source material deposits.

Two teachers from a Virginia city school indicated how students used the help of many classes and teachers in carrying on projects:

A group of students in connection with their study of the development of lights in the home made the following study: a frieze was drawn in the art department; others experimented in science laboratory with oxygen, magnets, electricity; another group in the shop wired a house-shaped board to show how a house of three floors could be properly wired; a group worked on history showing how different lights changed the lives of people; others studied the lives of scientists who have helped us develop lights. The whole class studied reading meters, working mathematics in connection with electric power. After a sharing period, the whole group evaluated the work by check-up.

The principal of a small Virginia rural school reported the following as representative of work done by teachers in the core program:

The teachers who have the pupils meet together once a week. For example, the pupils

³ See Giles, H. H. *Pupil Teacher Planning*. A reprint of this brochure appears in the appendix of this volume.

in the eighth grade selected to work on the problem "Making a Living on the Farm." The problem was started in the history class. In history the pupils studied the different enterprises which could be undertaken to make a living on the farm. The English teacher used her period to help the pupils write for material on the problem. She also helped in outlining and the preparation of their reports. The agriculture and home economics teachers organized their classes around the problem which had been selected. The mathematics teacher aided in the study of family budgets, farm budgets, taxation, insurance and the measuring of lumber. One semester of eighteen weeks was devoted to this problem.

The pupils made tours of the most successful farms in the county. Groups visited such offices as the Farm Demonstration Agent, Home Demonstration Agent, County Treasurer, Clerk of the Court, Commissioner of Revenue, and the Superintendent of Public Schools. They found out what each officer was able to contribute to help the farmers of the county. Each group made a report to the entire class on their findings. I think the most interesting activity was the visit to the progressive farms of the county.

Community Schools Present Opportunities

The community oriented programs were particularly rich resources in indicating clues for balanced living by teachers and students. *The Story of Holtville* very fully develops what was done when students created a community oriented program in that high school.⁴ It will be recalled that through their efforts a number of important community services were made possible such as a chicken hatchery, food lockers, canning factory, spray rig, and a repair shop. The school program continued to include the kind of activities which enabled youth to develop the language skills, mathematic and scien-

tific skills necessary for the citizen today. Full information concerning this program can be found in the report cited above. One of the teachers of the Holtville High School discussed the advantages and disadvantages of this program to students and teachers. We quote her report as follows:

Advantages to students: They cease to work for grades. Need for cheating is removed. They get the feeling that they are somebody. All can excel in something. They become more secure socially. They develop originality, initiative, independence, dependability, and good work habits. They learn to work alone and in a group, to assume responsibility, to live in a democracy, to enjoy living.

Advantages to teachers: To my way of thinking, teachers develop in the same way. Just as we allow students freedom and encourage development, so the principal allows teachers to do their own thinking and share in most of the planning. We learn to work with students as friends and helpers. We come into closer contact with parents and community people. And most important of all—we enjoy life and teaching. Each day is different, full of exciting possibilities and new developments.

Disadvantages to students: Students accustomed to being told what to do, when, and how, find it difficult when left on their own. Some are lazy and will try and get by with less than their best effort. Sometimes work becomes a little too individualized and selfish. There are more groups than teachers, and sometimes students get careless about habits and effort when they work constantly without a teacher.

Disadvantages to teachers: I miss the pleasure of teaching literature—reading poems to students, helping them interpret prose and poetry. Because we should not force every student to study "literature" I fear we do not give them enough to make them see whether they like it or not.

This kind of teaching is especially demanding on time, effort, and patience of teachers. Each staff member has a home room group for whom he is responsible in all ways, all the service classes in his de-

⁴ Faculty and Students of Holtville High School, *The Story of Holtville*, The Southern Association Study, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee: 1943.

partment, and from one to a dozen various responsibilities that have no classification—printing shop, barber shop, auditorium group, outside farm work, council, guides, and programs, and in addition, the study exacts many burdensome reports. Moreover, other agencies and individuals are always asking for reports and visiting the plant. Planning and paper-checking require many after-school hours. There is also the responsibility of interpreting and justifying the program to skeptics. But this disadvantage of extra work is more than compensated for by the advantages stated above.

A Negro high school in Texas has also a community oriented program. Among the things reported from this school were the following activities:

The homemaking girls improved the kitchens of several nearby homes. We visited these homes, and activities were reported by those who took part, while results were reported by those who merely observed. Mathematics was employed in calculating or estimating the amount of materials needed, and the cost of the project.

Several modern homes were built under the direction of the vocational agriculture and social science teacher, who is also proficient in manual arts. A local sawmill, a barn built by vocational boys, and a community workshop engaged in by parents, teachers, and pupils provided a wealth of practical experience.

To supplement the foregoing paragraph an excerpt from the report of the mathematics teacher is added:

With the homemaking teacher we solve problems that have to do with cooking, serving, buying, selling, etc. In her home improvement units we figure cost of papering, painting, and the covering of the floors with linoleum.

With the teacher of vocational agriculture we figure or solve problems that have to do with lumber. We have figured the cost of the building of the barn of one of our patrons, its capacity and other related problems. (Students participated in the construction of this building.)

In doing some of the above-mentioned work, we made field trips, had various interviews—set up our objectives and saw and understood the conditions surrounding or included in the problems involved.

The community workshop referred to above was carried on for one week. The workshop was organized to include teachers, students and their parents, and others in the community. The homemaking club prepared and sold noonday lunches. Other activities engaged in were group planning regarding health, participation in recreation, religious training, furniture repair, metal work, study of the diseases and care of poultry and livestock, and identification of and ways to transplant and care for native trees and shrubbery. Reports of this community workshop were written up by students and an analysis of the use of mathematics by students and parents in the workshop was also made by the students.

The Evidence Is There

These reports give some clues as to developments within secondary schools which bear on criteria cited earlier. They are particularly illustrative of recurrent analysis of the needs of youth and of student-teacher planning. It should be noted that schedules provided opportunity for continuity of personnel and for continuity for the purposes of establishing learning relationships. The hypothesis here is that the secondary school must make opportunities for students to have such continuity if balanced living is to be made possible. The work of the teachers is worth some additional attention. It will be noted that the teachers were confronted with the need for an opportunity for plan-

ning together. In examining the reports of teachers from the two hundred and eighty-five schools in the study of cooperative planning and teaching, the following information came to light:

Greatest sources of stimulation:

Seventy-five per cent of the teachers indicated that they became involved in modified programs because of the mutual interest of two or more teachers.

Sixty-five per cent indicated that they became involved because of the interest and leadership of the administrative and supervisory staff, in addition to their own interest.

Slightly over fifty per cent indicated that they became involved in these changes because of their own personal initiative.

Least challenging sources of stimulation:

On the other end of the scale, the least significant source of stimulation for their entering this work came from "extension work."

The next least significant source of stimulation for the development of experimental work came from laymen in the community.

The third least stimulating source was from summer school attendance.

The role of consultants or visiting authorities, conferences, and workshop participation were sources of stimulation only somewhat less significant than the three most stimulating sources indicated above.

The Effort Is Not Complete

These few examples of practice in certain schools add increased evidence that schools are carrying on programs such as those reported in *Education for All American Youth*.⁵ They provide, in the judgment of the author, more opportunity for student participation and for balanced living than would have

been the case had the schools continued to operate in terms of prevailing departmental pattern with "extra curricular" programs as safety valves. The fact that such programs exist is encouraging, but much yet needs to be done. For the most part, the examples cited here are yet more heavily oriented to the classroom than would seem desirable. If the necessary provisions for balanced living are to be provided, attention should be directed to overall programs of work experience, relationships between work experience, and study about the world's work which citizens do should be more effectively established. The secondary school program reveals much concern for language arts, but communication arts involving use of newspapers, radio, films, and magazines, as well as the use of visual and graphical arts are slighted. Experiences which promote international and intercultural understanding constitute "musts" in educating for democratic survival. Such experiences should be woven into the pattern of daily living of youth. The experiences designed to promote understanding in personal-social relationships; home and family living; and recreation including school camps, forests and farms require yet much attention. The application of principles which would promote characteristic critical thinking rather than occasional exercises in critical thinking are also in need of greater attention. These needs can better be met as continuity in participation and planning is given even greater attention and as secondary schools continue to move toward community oriented programs.

⁵ *Education for All American Youth*, Educational Policies Commission. Washington, D. C.: The National Education Association. 1944.

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