

and executed by the pupils; and the food was served by the mothers.

One practice which has served to interpret the school to the home is the sending home of the next week's lunch menus on Friday. This aids the mothers in planning home meals to supplement those of the school. For the homes of children who do not eat in the school lunchroom, suggestions for balanced meals are thus made available.

The classroom teacher also receives a copy of the menus. She is able to use it as a teaching-learning situation. As teachers and children study the menus they often decide to invite the dietitian to tell them more about the particular food in question. Recently a group of eight-year-olds was discussing the

merits of whole-grain bread. Though not agreed in their choices as to taste they did agree that the dietitian could give information on its food values. The group's interest in cereals grew, and cereals other than wheat were studied. There was also a marked increase in the number who now selected whole-grain instead of white bread for lunch.

It seems now that the lunchroom program is realizing some of its ultimate goals. Good food and health practices are evident in everyday living. Intelligent cooperation between home and school has been developed. An attitude of friendliness and goodwill is apparent as teachers, pupils, parents, and administrators work together on other problems yet to be solved.

Living Laboratory for Learning

BERTIE BACKUS

Adults often fail to allow youngsters to assume responsibility, even when readiness for it has been shown. Bertie Backus, principal, Alice Deal Junior High School, Washington, D. C. describes one junior high school program in which responsibility was assumed by students and the improved relationships which resulted.

"THE PROBLEM of adolescents is that they have nothing to grow into. Delinquents are not delinquents because their parents don't watch them, or because they haven't any place to play basketball, or because there are too many beer joints on every corner. They are delinquent because in addition to their tension over the individual failures and their individual families, they have no real part to play in the life of the world. They are boiling over with vitality and ability which our society does not want

or need. We insist that they stop acting like children but refuse to let them act like adults."¹

The junior high schools of the country are teeming with adolescents "boiling over with vitality and ability" which the school can and often does use in creating a community life within its borders, a life rich in opportunities for learning.

The cornerstone of any successful

¹ Della D. Cyrus. "What's Wrong with the Family." *Atlantic Monthly*, Nov. 1946.

program that organizes the life of the school so as to use the vitality and ability of adolescents is the attitude of the school's faculty. No student group can assume responsibility unless teachers consider pupil assumption of responsibility as important educational activity. In order to create a faculty "readiness" the principal must exert positive leadership in evolving a school philosophy of education, must be resourceful in devising means of integrating school activities, in giving menial tasks a significance that relieves tedium, and in helping teachers feel that they, too, belong to the school and share its successes and accomplishments.

A faculty study of a bulletin on discipline, served as a basis for one junior high school faculty to review and restate its philosophy of individual and group management. Planning the schedule so that a few teachers are responsible for the same groups of pupils; teachers' meetings built around such an organization; rotation of teachers' extra-curricular assignments so that all teachers understand and share responsibility for the total school community program; pupil-teacher planning of activities and setting up goals—these are but illustrations of the measures a principal and his faculty may utilize to reach a state of "readiness" to use the school community as a laboratory for learning.

Bases for School Operation

The faculty believes in the improbability of all the school's pupils; it knows that some pupils may reach the limits of their improbability in academic studies long before they reach the limits of their improbability through partic-

ipation in the life of the school. The school community thus assumes great importance in meeting the needs of all pupils.

The faculty knows that learning comes through planning, through the assumption of responsibility, through attempts, though feeble, to reach desired goals, and not in perfection of outcomes. The faculty learns to set the stage for pupil activity, to counsel if needs be, but to wait for growth. Unless a faculty can thus subordinate itself, school activities become as hollow and as devoid of educational experience for pupils as the most formalized subject matter.

The faculty knows that the acceptance of such a philosophy means relinquishing control to properly constituted pupil authority, but the faculty knows also the difference between noise and confusion attendant upon purposeful activity and noise and confusion that are evidences of chaos, and constantly revises its own direction of pupil activities.

Are They "Ready"?

Attention must also be given to pupil "readiness" if the life of the school community is to be utilized as a laboratory for learning. Alice Deal Junior High School opened last September with painters all over the place. Five classrooms were to be blocked off each week for painting; corridors were cluttered with ladders, buckets of paint, paint brushes being soaked; some stairways were always closed to traffic—a perfect situation for chaos—or for learning. The faculty chose to make it a situation for learning. On the very first day of school, pupils were called into the audi-

torium in groups small enough for discussion. The principal explained that by painting during the school year as well as in the summer the school was able to save \$1700. Procedures of budget, bids, contracts, and default on contract were discussed. Measures for cooperating with the painters in order to speed up the painting schedule were proposed and determined upon. All pupils left school on the opening day with a sense of anticipatory pride in the appearance of their building and with a "readiness" to accept all the inconveniences and responsibilities for self-control and self-direction which the painting of the building required of them. No group of adults could have carried on with less friction and annoyance than eleven hundred junior high school boys and girls have done since that opening day.

From its beginnings Alice Deal Junior High School has provided an environment in which every attempt is made to treat boys and girls as intelligent, responsible, and responsive citizens, and give them, firsthand, all information that will help them to meet every new situation with intelligence. When the school was opened in 1931, the faculty set up a series of home room studies designed to make pupils aware of the cost of equipping and maintaining a junior high school. Building costs, equipment costs, maintenance costs, teachers' salaries, sources of school revenue—these were the big items of study with no details omitted. Pupils were very critical of the high cost of such specialized equipment as tables for home economic classes, science laboratory desks, and tools for shop. "Why must it be so?" "Then why don't we

get along with simpler material?" When rough tables had to be covered with oil cloth for use in the cafeteria until equipment could be bought the principal explained the situation to a seventh grade class and concluded, "Those thumbtacks would serve nicely for a group of grownups, but they can make very nice playthings for little boys," to which a boy on the front row exclaimed, "I wouldn't have mentioned that if I were you"—but the thumbtacks remained on the job.

Many Learning Areas

Hand in hand with "readiness" to meet the demands of community life must go some form of simple governmental machinery which pupils understand and can use in assuming their share of responsibility for group life. A home room organization with elected officers and student appointed committees; a student council composed of presidents of home rooms, or of elected representatives, presided over by officers elected by the entire student body forms the basis for student participation in the management of the school community. Certain school routines are handled entirely by the council—fire drill, keeping the building and grounds clean, arranging exhibits for bulletin boards and display cabinets, management of the lunchroom, presiding at assemblies. In many junior high schools the student council promotes school activities such as intramural sports, glee clubs, Junior Red Cross clubs, and the social program of the school, but when the membership of these activities has been determined pupils usually elect their own officers and function independently of the student council. Such activities provide

rich opportunities for learning. Intra-mural sports are organized by pupils; pupils make up their teams and serve as officials in all sports. A neighborhood tournament can thus be carried on after school just as successfully as during the school program.

School canteens were organized in many schools during the war, but in all too many schools this activity was dropped when family and community life became more normal. Alice Deal Junior High School found in its "Friday Night Club" so many extra-special opportunities for pupil learning that the activity has become a regular part of its program. A special committee of the student council organizes the club early in the school year. All pupils in the ninth grade and all pupils in the school who are fourteen years old regardless of grade are eligible to membership. A membership card entitles pupils to participate in fine evening programs at the school. When the ticket sale is closed members are then called together and elect officers, president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, for the semester. Ninth-grade home rooms then arrange the calendar of parties. The home room responsible for the party sets up committees to take care of every detail for a successful evening—decorating the girls' gym for dancing; setting up the boys' gym for badminton; ping pong, shuffle board, checkers, chess and table games; icing the coca cola; assembling the equipment for cooking hot dogs; programming the parents who volunteer to assist so that the door, wraps, and canteen will be taken care of at all times; buying prizes; arranging the music. Every member of the home room assumes some responsibility and carries

it through with the minimum of adult supervision.

The student council is also frequently busy with some project of schoolwide concern which has been assigned to it by school or community officials. During the war pupils collected paper as a patriotic service. It soon became apparent, however, that here was a situation that could be used to enrich the life of the school. A student council committee met with the principal to decide the best use to be made of funds derived from paper collection. After much discussion it was decided to sound-proof the ceilings of all corridors—a project that would cost about \$6000, but it could be done in small units thus spreading the cost over three years. Home room organizations were set up. A calendar of collections insured the least possible interruption to regular classroom activity—monthly quotas were established—everybody was lugging paper to school. When it became apparent that the pupils could not reach their goal from paper collections alone, the president of the student council presented the problem at a meeting of the Parent-Teacher Association. He spoke so convincingly that parents took over the responsibility for sound-proofing corridors on the second floor and the whole project was finished according to schedule.

The Students Ballot

The recent election afforded excellent opportunities for learning through participation in community activity. The Board of Trade conducted a plebiscite in the District of Columbia on November 4th designed to impress Congress with the desire of residents of the Dis-

strict to participate as citizens in the government of the city and nation. Students of junior and senior high schools carried on a student referendum on the subject. At Deal Junior High the student council managed the whole procedure; they set up three voting precincts, one on each floor; conducted a preliminary registration by which to check voting; counted the ballots; wrote the final report for the newspapers and for school officials. I shall never forget the dressed-up appearance of the council president on that day. It was as if he had summoned every resource to help him carry the weight of responsibility for the occasion and the dignity of his office.

Yes, the school community is rich in opportunities for learning; only we must make sure that we understand what is being learned and that we do not claim too much for the busy, happy life of the school. Only thus can we be sure that all important learnings are taking place. It would be rash, indeed, to claim that participation in school activities is a substitute for learning the basic skills of English and mathematics; or in acquiring the vocabulary of a foreign language, or understanding the principles of science, or in gaining insight into the behavior of nations. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence to show that pupils who feel that they are partners in the management of the school, that they are loved and respected and accepted by teachers and by fellow pupils, learn academic subjects more readily than pupils whose spirits and emotions are not thus free.

What, then, do pupils learn in the community life of the school? Why is it a major concern in schools today?

Results Are Totaled

They learn to select leaders and to work with them. They learn to set up programs calling for action and to stick to the job until the goal is reached. They learn to meet emergencies. They develop healthy attitudes toward work and toward personal responsibility. They discover their own powers and learn to use them.

David had been elected president of his home room for three semesters. I don't think David himself quite knew why: his was not a forceful leadership; he participated in many school activities but was outstanding only in glee club. And then the home room teacher got sick, leaving David and the substitute to struggle with the disorder of the class. At first he did nothing about bringing order out of chaos—was inclined to “wait for the teacher's return.” After a conference with the principal David began to see that acceptance of office is a pledge to leadership; his father helped him to plan techniques of control—a new personality is emerging, a personality which the pupils sensed even before the boy himself.

The hurly-burly of school life helps pupils to clarify their own code of ethics—in sports, in following the leadership of their peers, in social activities pupils are building for themselves a code of behavior. “What shall we do about smoking?” was the first question asked at the first meeting of the Board of Directors for the Friday Night Club. “Cancel the membership” was the unanimous decision of the group. “What hour is late?” is a bone of contention in every household when adolescents are just beginning to find

the center of their social life outside the home. The first Board of Directors set eleven o'clock as the closing hour for the Friday Night Club and each succeeding board has reaffirmed the decision.

Boys and girls broaden their sympathies and increase their understanding of the problems of others when they assume responsibility for the management of school life. The hunchback, the dwarf, the "prune," the show-off—all are accepted and fitted into the pattern of living and working and playing together. All enjoy that sense of belonging to a group and thrill with pride to

a group success. "Our group got A on clean-up today;" "Our home room has been reported excellent every day for tables in the cafeteria;" "Our team is leading in the league;" "Our dance was the best dance we have ever had;" and so it goes.

In giving growing boys and girls important and useful functions in the life of the school we postpone, if we do not actually prevent, that sense of frustration and futility which is at the heart of delinquency, whether of adolescent or of adult. "Give us kids something to live up to and we will be all-right," said a student council president.

Learning by Working Together

T. H. BROAD

Recognition of problems and sharing in their solutions by group effort gives momentum to learning abilities. T. H. Broad, principal, Daniel Webster High School, Tulsa, Okla. illustrates this by his account of how one high school worked together in promoting better school living.

TALK ABOUT the strengths of a democratic society invariably places stress on the rights and privileges of individuals living in such a society. And such strengths are not to be passed over lightly. But, if a weakness in our society has existed, it has been in the failure of individuals to assume and carry out their responsibilities in such a social order. In preparing children and youth for assuming these responsibilities the school must provide a society in which children *learn* democracy, rather than just learn *about* it.

When a school program provides all the direction for children and teachers, and when, from a central source, the directions are such that no thinking is

necessary on the part of members of that particular society, no corresponding responsibilities need to be accepted by the individuals. In such social orders little opportunity is provided for individuals to learn to assume responsibility.

In order to implement such assumption of responsibility, it has been the practice at Daniel Webster High School to provide as many opportunities as possible for students to participate in actual planning and carrying out of projects that involve their own living. Such a program at times seems to operate more slowly, and to some with more confusion, but the end results are more satisfactory.

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