

will learn what they live, what they accept to act upon, what fits in with but also goes beyond their own previous experience. The school alone cannot provide such learning opportunities, but the school working in close cooperation with all other community agencies

can do the job. That is precisely why this whole community education movement is no passing fad of the moment. It is rather the practical expression of the best we know about how to develop real learning of genuine worth to individuals and to society alike.

Vital Environment for Learning

C. L. BIRD

Planning a good curriculum for youth is important, and that administration must lend a helping hand to the teacher is voiced by C. L. Bird, superintendent, Wilson Public School, Wilson, Ark.

FOR FIFTEEN years the Wilson Public School which is located in the middle of some of the world's richest farming land, has been working on a program to enrich and vitalize the school curriculum to give the greatest possible help to the pupils and to the community. There are twenty-four teachers with a school population of five hundred and twenty-five in the twelve grades. The curriculum is based on life problems with an activity or work period set up in each grade. During that period units are planned, executed and evaluated. Need for special drill coming out of these work periods is cared for in special skill periods set up to handle the basic tools of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The pupil is given every possible opportunity to learn by doing and much effort is exercised to provide many lifelike experiences for each child. The school is in many respects the center of the community and is open at all times for the use of the community.

The school community presents innumerable opportunities for learning.

Students learn much from direct participation in well-planned activities. The key to much of the success of this type of program is sound efficient planning. It requires teachers and administrators of broad knowledge and broad vision who are not adverse to hard work. For, contrary to opinion, the newer type program requires more, rather than less, work. But it pays dividends in better prepared, better-adjusted pupils with a wider range of experiences. Children have an opportunity to learn by doing and community resources add to the classroom tools of learning.

In this type of program the responsibilities of the teacher are heavier and more varied. Added to a good basic training, teachers need a thorough understanding of the type of program the school follows. This requires time spent in on-the-job training.

Beginning with a basic interest in children, the teacher must understand the whole program and her place in it. To do this requires time spent in study and in conferences. An eagerness to

improve the instruction is also essential because it is extremely difficult to play a vital part in a program one does not understand nor believe in.

Ways and Means of Planning

More time and effort must go into planning. A plan of work tailored to fit one group may not fit the next group at all. Before the children enter the picture, much preparatory work must be done. The room itself demands attention from the teacher. Is it comfortably arranged? Is it cheerful and conducive to the best work? Are materials and tools easily accessible to the children? Is there sufficient material available to carry out a unit? Do you know something of the home background of the children with whom you are to work? Are the scholastic records of the children available?

Next the teacher must plan with the children. What are their interests? In the planning of the room the children are encouraged to make it as attractive and livable as possible. When they plan and execute the beautifying of a room with curtains, chair backs, plants, pictures, and other finishing touches, the room becomes theirs to care for and interest will be evident in their treatment of the objects in that room.

After the room is arranged to the best advantage, comes the planning of the units selected by the teacher and pupils together. It is the responsibility of the teacher to see that this planning is thorough and covers the basic needs. It is also her responsibility to see that the unit fits into the total school program so that the child will have the benefit of a well-rounded curriculum.

The teacher too must take care to see that the experiences in a unit are many and varied. She must follow closely the need for skill subjects in the unit. Time must be provided for individual conferences with the pupil as well as conferences with other teachers to see that the child's best interests are served.

Have the Tools Ready

The teacher must keep her materials up to date and be on the alert constantly for new and improved materials. It is her responsibility to study the needs of her group and have ready the tools necessary for the completion of the work involved. She must be willing to spend time in experimenting with new materials and in learning their use.

The keeping of records concerning the child's school growth is primarily the responsibility of the teachers who are in daily contact with the child. Every teacher should have a cumulative record of each child's activities filed for easy reference. Information as to the child's home background, previous training, special talents and weaknesses or strength, as well as physical records are an aid in furthering the development of a well-balanced individual. Personal conferences with the pupil add to the teacher's knowledge of the needs of the child. More time must be spent in studying the child and his needs in order to make classroom work more effective.

Know the Human and Material Resources

It is the teacher's responsibility to know the community and its resources. In order to do this, time must be spent in becoming familiar with the community and its industries. Before con-

ducting a field trip it is necessary for the teacher to visit and understand the industry to be studied. For example, if in the study of cotton, a visit to the oil mill is contemplated, the teacher must know what information can be learned through the visit. Frequent excursions by the teacher to inspect industrial plants enable her to know which of these can be used as aids in classroom learning.

Closely related to knowledge of the community physical resources, is the need for knowledge of the people of the community. The teacher should know as many as possible of the people of the community not only as bases for using them as supplementary material for classes but to strengthen the tie between the school and community. This same knowledge of the community gives the teacher a better understanding of the community needs.

Enter the Administrator

An administrator must first of all maintain an open mind toward change. Teachers sense an unwillingness on the part of the administrator to allow experimentation and so take the line of least resistance and follow the same old pattern.

The administrator must not only allow experimentation but must encourage it. He should plan with teachers and give them an opportunity to try new activities. He should be receptive to new ideas on the part of the classroom teachers and encourage individual initiative. He should allow the teachers a large part in planning the school program. There should be fewer autocratic regulations and more democratic planning on the part of the entire group.

An administrator must be willing to put in the many extra hours required to plan with teachers individually or in groups. Otherwise, there may be a spotty program. Some teachers will enrich their program regardless of administrative guidance; others will catch fire only from a live-wire program, planned and instigated cooperatively by administrator and teachers. To achieve a schoolwide program requires the concerted effort of everyone from the superintendent down to the janitor, and it must be sparked by people genuinely interested in children.

An in-service program does much to develop teacher responsibility. Conferences of the entire faculty to plan a unified program are necessary. These conferences, in our school, take the form of a two-hour faculty meeting once each week. In these meetings we have set up steering, social, publications, and guidance committees. The steering committee, composed of classroom teachers, plans the year's study of activities. The first step usually is a brief questionnaire given to each teacher in which he or she has an opportunity to express a preference as to what special topics he would like to have studied. These requests are tabulated and the year's program built around them. Some topics are the bases of group discussions led by a committee selected from the faculty. For others, outside speakers are invited to discuss specified problems with the group. At regular intervals the meeting period is set aside for committee meetings. One meeting in six is recreational. Out of these large group studies other problems come up that require further study. On such problems special com-

mittees are set up for more intensive study. Some of these committees continue their study in summer schools on various college campuses and the following year bring the results of their study back to the entire group.

Preschool conferences give teachers needed time to plan together the entire program of the school and thus build a unified one that takes into account the whole child. Teachers must have time to plan together to prevent gaps in the progressive education of a child.

In addition to the group study and planning, the administrator must make provisions for conferences and help to new teachers in order to facilitate their becoming a part of the entire program.

Good Scheduling Is a Must

The administrator must see to the arranging of schedules. Classes should be scheduled to allow closer integration of subject fields. For example, in the junior high school area, several plans have been tried to allow closer cooperation among teachers. After several experiments we have arrived at the plan of having one teacher handle the core subjects of language arts and social studies. This takes the major portion of half a school day. The other subjects: science, mathematics, physical education, and music fill out the second half. This helps materially in bridging the transitional period between elementary grades, when pupils are with one teacher all day, to the high school classes taught by several different teachers.

The administrator should see to the providing of materials to further the work of the teachers. Comfortable, well-lighted, adequately heated rooms

with sufficient bulletin board space are a basic necessity. Comfortable, attractive furniture that is light and movable should also be provided in each room. In addition to these requirements it is the administrator's responsibility to see that books, charts, maps, tools and other audio-visual aids and classroom materials are available for classroom use. He can also aid in arranging transportation and time for field trips.

He should see that teachers are not overloaded. It is his business to provide sufficient teachers to keep classes down to a workable number. In addition it is his responsibility to see that no one teacher carries too heavy a load of outside activities. This is important if teachers are to have adequate time to plan work properly.

Democracy Pays Dividends

The administrator should be willing to delegate responsibility to teachers. A trained teacher who has done a reasonably good job in a classroom will justly resent having to explain every move she makes. Too many handed-down orders kill initiative on the part of a teacher. Sometimes democracy is a slower process but it pays dividends in the end in helping make teachers more vocal. We use interest as a motivating action on children; why not apply the same criteria to teachers in order to weld your school together into a single powerful unit.

A well-balanced school program, effective in providing many lifelike experiences for each pupil is a result of close cooperation between administrator and teachers. Only then can a school become an instrument for producing the greatest good in its community.

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