

# My Teacher Went to the Workshop—

MARY BEAUCHAMP, PARTICIPATING TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS<sup>1</sup>

Says Mary Beauchamp, consultant in curriculum development, Minneapolis, Minn., concerning this account of the carryover from a summer workshop, "The purpose of this article is to try to tell how the values and purposes of the workshop have carried over into classroom teaching during the present school year. To gather the necessary material, some nineteen teachers who attended the summer workshop and who represent a cross-section of subject matter and grade level placement were asked to tell how they have carried out workshop techniques and attitudes in their everyday teaching. Material was gathered through conferences, visits to the classrooms, and written descriptions of what is actually taking place. The major part of the article is composed of direct quotations from the teachers and their students presented in a somewhat documentary form to illustrate the values of workshops. We have attempted to let the illustrations speak for themselves rather than to draw conclusions from them." The readers of *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP* will, we believe, welcome this insight into what can happen to programs of instruction for children as a result of inservice programs for teachers.

THE MINNEAPOLIS Public Schools held its first summer workshop in cooperation with the Summer Session of the University of Minnesota during the summer of 1946. The workshop was housed in one of the high schools of the city located close enough to the University so that its library, visual education laboratory, and other facilities could be used. The staff was composed of members of the Minneapolis public school system supplemented by University professors, visiting instructors from other school systems, and by a group of nationally known educators

who spent from one to three days in the workshop. Enrolled in the workshop were over a hundred Minneapolis teachers and principals who received scholarships from the Board of Education to meet their tuition expense. The workshop also included some teachers from outside Minneapolis.

The purposes of the Minneapolis summer workshop, like the purposes of good teaching, are so interrelated that it is difficult to identify and write about each one separately. We hope the reader will supply the connections which exist among the purposes described. We recognize, too, that the summer workshop is only one of many stimulating factors toward teacher growth. We will try to show how the purposes of the Minneapolis summer workshop have, in the opinions of the teachers themselves,

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carried over into classroom teaching in five fields:

1. School living is individual growth.
2. School living is intergroup living.
3. School living gains oneness through use of large instructional units.
4. School living is enmeshed with community living.
5. School living becomes democratic.

### School Living

#### *—is Individual Growth*

One of the purposes which served as a strand in weaving together all of the activities of the workshop was the need for understanding children as individuals. This need was dramatized by the benefits and real joy which we as teachers experienced in coming to know each other as individuals. We lived together six or eight hours daily for four weeks. We ate our lunches together; we had picnics; we sang; we gave skits; we had serious discussions; we formulated educational statements. And, at the end of the summer, we had a bond of common understanding as to what we were trying to do and an acceptance for the worth of each individual. This understanding and acceptance of the individual—his interests, abilities, needs—the way he differs from other people, the problems he has, is the essence of good teaching.

Last spring the Minneapolis Public Schools organized a program to be put into operation in the fall of 1946 for those incoming seventh grade students who the sixth grade teachers and the counselor felt needed some special aid as they came into the junior high school. The program could easily have become fixed as a means of segregating slow learners. Fifteen or twenty teach-

ers who were to be in the adjustment program spent much of their time in the workshop learning how they could best meet the needs of the boys and girls in the program. The teachers themselves tell us some of the steps which they have taken to make school living a matter of individual growth:

One of the first steps which I took in handling my adjustment group was a conference with the school counselor, visiting teacher, and principal. This gave a valuable insight as to the physical makeup, emotional pattern, special interests, abilities, needs, and desires of the individuals in the group, and later gave the clues for better handling the problems of each individual. We found that some individuals were not achieving because of poor work habits or emotional instability. In the smaller and more intimate environment of this class, it became possible to give individual attention to the building of attitudes which would help each individual meet his problem.

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How much more satisfying for a teacher to see a group of boys and girls reading and writing along the lines which interest them. For example, they want material on nursing, sewing, trapping, business, skiing, cooking, farming.

In the fall I studied the cumulative record cards for my different groups. The students wrote me letters telling about hobbies, interests, family—things which I, perhaps, could never have found out in any other way. Ever so often I have personal conferences with each one.

In a sixth grade class which has a typical range of children in it, the adjusting attitude of the teacher toward each individual child was encouraging to note. For instance, when one particularly slow boy was participating in the group on a par with the rest of the class, the teacher was quick to see

an opportunity to give him some indirect aid so that he might have a sense of achievement along with the rest of the group. In this same group of children, the boy with the highest I.Q. in the room is inclined to be overweight, sluggish, and awkward. He is a poor basketball player, but the attitudes of the youngsters toward each other are such that some of the better players took Ralph down to the gymnasium after school to give him some special practice in basketball skills.

The home visit is being used by some teachers as a means of becoming acquainted with individual students. Some of the high school teachers have been given a slightly lighter school load to carry on a program of home visits along with the development of a common learnings program. One of these teachers who has a tenth grade class writes:

Apparently home visits by classroom teachers had never taken place during the students' three years of junior high school. I gave the students a chance to state whether they would rather have the visit announced or unannounced. About a third of the class said to come any time convenient for me. Another third said that their parents worked outside of the home and therefore it would be necessary for me to call before coming. The other third also preferred to have me call ahead of time. Although most homes seemed to prefer to have visits take place in the front room on a certain day at a certain time, I feel that informal visits will bring out more frank expressions and that more genuine understandings will result.

A home visit is a distinct contrast to open house at PTA. Open house usually brings the parents whose sons and daughters are getting good grades in their subjects. The usual question is, "How is John or Mary getting along in your class?"

The teacher's usual reply is, "Fine." The answer is a prearrived-at-conclusion because that same John or Mary brought home a report card with A's and B's.

A home visit covers all types of students, the fail student as well as the A student. The fail student's parent is the father or mother whom the teacher needs to see so that he may learn some of the causes for the student's lack of achievement and also impart information about the purposes of the school.

With an incoming group of 10B's it would be an advantage if the teacher could spare part of the week prior to the opening of school for home visits.

Still another teacher has this to say about his experiences with individual growth:

Workshop leaders and groups stressed that whatever study or activity takes place should be in terms of the personal needs of the individual student. Needs vary with each individual. A very intelligent and scholarly boy in one of my groups is excessively shy and self-conscious in his group relations. For a long time he had been badgered by less able fellows with the nickname, "The Brain." In order to live at all comfortably he had retired from all group activities and buried himself in his studies as a refuge. By conducting various types of group activities involving studies suggested by the students themselves, this boy has gradually learned how to work with others and has succeeded in winning their respect and his own comfort as a part of the company.

—*is Intergroup Living*

During the past two years the Minneapolis Public Schools have been participating in an intergroup education project sponsored by the American Council on Education. On the basis of the school system's interest in developing good human relations, further stimulated by the project, intergroup

living values became one of the major purposes of our summer workshop. The approach to this problem in the classrooms has been both direct and indirect according to the need of the particular situation. There has been a conscious effort by hundreds of teachers to develop among growing boys and girls the kind of attitudes which result in good group living. Studies have been made of ways of changing attitudes. Teachers have acquired a broad understanding of the learning materials which are available in this field and have developed skill in the techniques of dealing with problems involving human relations.

One teacher is using the study of American literature as the spring-board for teaching intergroup values by attempting to build on the theme of "The American Dream" an understanding and appreciation of the human relationships which are at play in the home, the school, the community, the nation, and the world. Students have done a wide variety of reading pointed to an appreciation of the contributions made by various groups to the culture of America. One activity about which the students were especially enthusiastic was that of making posters to show the ways in which the nationalities represented in the class had contributed to the sum total of American life. One poster shows the nationalities as sheep and Uncle Sam as the shepherd. Another depicts each nationality as a note in "My Country 'Tis of Thee," the combination of notes representing the melody, which is America. In another, each stone in the wall of America is a different nationality, the caption being, "Make It Strong and Sturdy." These posters were displayed in the exhibit

case during Brotherhood Week. After an assembly program was given by the class for Brotherhood Week, members of the class were encouraged to state their subjective ideas as to what the occasion had meant to them. One Negro girl wrote:

I think that all of us caught the spirit of the occasion yesterday. I kept hearing the lines from the Declaration of Independence that read: "All men are created equal . . . that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights . . . that among these rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Some teachers have approached the teaching of intergroup living by a direct attack upon prejudice. One teacher describes her work as follows:

Since this was the first time I had tried to organize a whole unit on intergroup education, I was groping somewhat blindly for the correct techniques and proceeded much of the time by trial and error. I belonged to the Intergroup Section of the Summer Workshop last summer, and this was a great help to me in finding my source material.

At the beginning of the study, the classes and I talked very freely about the meaning of "prejudice," the various prejudices each of us might have, how prejudices develop, why they grow in some people but don't in others, the evils resulting from prejudices—individually and nationally—the opportunities we have for getting rid of our prejudices (if we want to do so), and the good we can accomplish by doing so.

We spent three days in class discussion—a very necessary part of the procedure, I think, for in that time we aroused enthusiasm for study on the subject, and helped each and every one to feel he had something worthwhile to contribute, and that he was definitely part of the project.

I then read several short stories and poems to the class about the trials and

tribulations boys and girls of various minority groups have had. I read many quotations of prominent people to them, so that they would realize that the subject was one of great importance.

All the leaflets, circulars, posters, books, and other materials that I could find I displayed in my room and gave the pupils many opportunities for browsing. We also sang songs from the book "Sing a Song of Friendship" by Irving Caesar.

I gave the class a list of short stories on this subject that I thought they would find interesting, and they were permitted to choose the ones that appealed to them most. Two or three pupils volunteered to lead the discussion of each story.

We went to the library where each pupil found a book on intergroup living that interested him for his outside reading.

Each pupil gave at least one oral talk on some phase of intergroup living that he had found in a magazine or newspaper.

A panel discussion on the subject "What value is there for me in a discussion of intolerance" was given by eight members of the group elected by the class. We also saw a movie, "The House I Live In."

Finally, I suggested to the class that they devote one period to a sort of summary of their reactions to this unit of work so that I might judge whether I should offer it to other groups. I asked them to give their own personal reaction to the subject in any way they chose to do it—by a short talk, a skit, an essay, a dramatization, a poem, a song, or any method which suited their fancy—just so it expressed each person's own feeling about this subject. This approach resulted in a program which was of such worth that it was presented to several groups within the school. In this unit the children became acquainted with a wide variety of material, and although it may not always follow, their attitudes were improved.

The expressions of two seventh grade students in another group which was studying intergroup living help to summarize the change in attitude which

often results when information is given in the proper setting:

I have heard many things about the Jewish religion, most of them not good. In fact I cannot recall anything good or nice that has been said about it at all. After hearing that program yesterday, (Hanukkah assembly program to which this group was invited) it is hard to understand why people can say things about other religions that cannot be considered good. The only explanation or reason for that, that I can figure out, is a lack of understanding.

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When a Negro citizen of the community came to visit our class last fall it was a great thrill. There are probably millions of better speakers, but she struck home with her informal talk. We had been trying to understand the discriminations and bigotry against some peoples, but only could a person that had been discriminated against show how it feels. Not one of us can really understand how it would feel not to be able to rent a house in a certain district, enter swimming meets, or be unable to work in a certain place because he had black skin. It seems that prejudices are inborn, but they aren't. Every one of us can stop feeling that Negroes aren't good enough if we want to. The trouble is that people associate all the discrimination, bigotry, and prejudices with other people and not themselves.

As Mrs. Milton talked, it came to me that the Negro of today does understand, to some extent at least, *our* problem, but we don't understand theirs.

*—gains Oneness Through Large Instructional Units*

The teachers who attended the Minneapolis summer workshop felt that one of the besetting sins of the traditional educational program, especially on the secondary level, is that of dividing the school program into small bits. Consequently, one of the points of emphasis was to become familiar with the tech-

niques of developing and using large instructional units. This emphasis led into a discussion of the common learnings or core program. As a result many teachers became convinced that secondary education must be reorganized to meet the needs of the youth attending our high schools. The Minneapolis Public Schools now have approximately two hundred teachers enrolled in an in-service study program in common learnings. Although large instructional units are used on all levels, our discussion will be limited to the common learnings program and will attempt to show some of the concomitants of this approach to teaching. One teacher writes thus:

At present we are working on a unit on power. In developing the history of power we employed pupil-teacher planning. The class is now working individually and in groups on the problems of their interest. Some of their activities are diagrams on the board, posters, use of slides from the library, construction of water-wheels to be used in the explanation of direct water power. They have been encouraged to use their initiative so I am not sure what will happen when they are ready to share their results with the class. I have found that they are quite outspoken in self-evaluation. On the day following a self-managed class period, I said, "By the way, what kind of power did you use yesterday when you were alone?" (I thought they might say they did a little more moving about than usual.) It didn't take one of the boys long to respond, "Will power."

Another teacher describes his use of large instructional units thus:

There has been a growing tendency to organize the curriculum around the problems of youth. Some of the problems which have been considered are: "What I Believe and Why." (This led into a study

of comparative religions.) Another group became interested in the way that community institutions operate. They are studying hospitals, schools, social agencies, city government, and are visiting examples of each of these institutions or agencies.

Since the use of large instructional units has led out to the community, further evaluation of this purpose is implied in the next section of this article.

#### *—is Enmeshed With Community Living*

As the school system has accepted a broader concept of the curriculum, teachers are coming to have a deeper understanding of the possibilities of enmeshing school and community living. Efforts are being made to help youth understand the contribution which they can make to the solution of community problems and gain practice in accepting their share of the responsibility for improving the quality of community life. We have found individuals and organizations within the community universally eager to work with the school in furthering the school's aims and in helping the future citizens of this country to understand different phases of community life. The schools work closely with such organizations as The Minneapolis Round Table of the National Conference of Christians and Jews which lends materials, furnishes speakers, and participates extensively in school programs; the Urban League, and other organizations representing minority groups; the YWCA and the YMCA which conduct youth programs in our schools; labor; service organizations; Chambers of Commerce;

and others. To describe a few of the community undertakings which have been happening in the words of the teachers who have been doing them—

After some preliminary readings in the literature and history of religion, the students made field trips to churches of many denominations. One Saturday morning a group of us attended a service at Temple Israel. A story which impressed the students with respect for all religions as well as living their own successfully was presented. Two girls visited a church of the Latter Day Saints; and as a result of their visit, several young people from that church attended a youth meeting at the Lutheran church to which the two girls belonged. The final activity of this study was a round table discussion conducted by the various groups on their findings and experiences. At the present time the planning committee of the class is trying to discover some civic project in which the group may become active. They have decided to visit the Junior Chamber of Commerce to see if that group has some suggestions for civic work with which the class may concern itself. Two boys who are labor minded suggested that they contact the Central Labor Union to find out some way for the group to become better acquainted with labor's program and their officials.

Another teacher describes her students' participation in community living:

A community project which turned out well was our Christmas collection. Because I felt that my homeroom was indifferent about giving to an impersonal Christmas fund, I asked the visiting teacher to come to our room to tell us about one or two special families that we might help. She told us of one family that had very little income and no coal to heat a dilapidated six-room house. In fact, the only heat came from a gas stove in the kitchen. There were three babies, all under four, who had very little milk to drink. Our

visiting teacher felt that, if we could give two or three dollars toward a milk fund, we would be doing something worth while. The idea caught on. One of the girls drew a milk bottle on the board with the caption, "Let's fill the bottle." The picture led to questions about the bottle; and before we knew it, we had fifty dollars to turn over to the visiting teacher. Emotion, as well as intellect, has to be appealed to.

We feel we have only begun to tap the resources of the community and the possibilities of enmeshing school and community living. For example, the opportunity to help youth understand the conditions in a community which allow families to live in an underprivileged way would have been a worthwhile extension of the milk project. We are encouraged, however, because teachers are enthusiastic about extending their understandings and skills in school-community living.

—*becomes Democratic*

The teachers who furnished material for this article by evaluating their program in terms of the purposes of the Minneapolis summer workshop found it was most difficult to identify those things which they were doing which make for democratic school living. Some of them said they hadn't done anything, but went on to describe activities which were initiated and carried out through teacher-pupil planning. Since democracy is such an intangible thing, and since ideally it laces through all of school living, we find it difficult to identify a specific procedure and say, "This is democracy." So much depends on *how* a thing is done. We will try to indicate a few practices which seem to be inherently democratic, rec-

ognizing that these represent only a partial description of the tangibilities of democratic living.

In the summer workshop small group discussions were utilized throughout the program. The active participation of *all* members of the group and the arriving at common agreements acceptable to all were goals of each group. One teacher describes his attempts to carry out this technique in his classroom:

In lieu of a textbook, delayed two weeks in arrival at the beginning of this school year, my history classes became discussion groups dealing with timely topics occupying special emphasis in the daily press and current magazines.

To make these discussion periods self-directed, fully participated in, and planned and prepared by the entire class, several steps were taken.

Students were asked to submit a list of topics for discussion based upon current news events. A panel of four to six students was selected to lead each discussion. Following the discussion from the table, the chairman was directed to invite further participation from the rest of the class. Each student turned in an evaluation and summary of the entire discussion.

Directions on how to conduct a panel discussion were given by the instructor. The chairman for each discussion was especially instructed in introducing the topic, in leading the panel, and in promoting discussion from the floor. He was also required to summarize the general conclusions or opinions arrived at by the entire class. One member of a previous panel was selected to direct the next panel as a chairman. In this manner each new group had an experienced leader in charge.

Such subjects as these were covered by the classes in panel discussions:

1. How can students promote international understanding for world peace?
2. How can students promote support for the United Nations?

3. How can better understanding and friendship be established between Russia and the United States?
4. Should all boys physically fit be given compulsory military training?

These topics kept classes more interested and enthusiastic in day by day procedures than subject matter centered around textbook assignments. Students were eager to meet as a panel group in the library to gather material to substantiate or alter previous opinions on these American problems or issues.

A second procedure that in many ways seems to be the foundation of democratic practice is teacher-pupil planning. Let's listen to an actual description of how it works in one senior high class:

The idea that students and teachers can actually plan the study and activities of the classroom is the most radical departure from traditional classroom practices and requires the greatest change on the part of the teacher. At first the students do not accept the idea as being sincere, and some students mistakenly make discipline problems of themselves. The teacher accustomed to being "boss" is tempted to resume old discipline techniques to bring about law and order. However, by organizing an "Ethics" committee composed of the more understanding students, the troublesome types can be persuaded by their fellows to settle down and work for the common good.

A "planning committee" was organized by the group. The chairman of this committee was also chairman of the whole room. This idea was taken from the organization of the workshop. On Monday mornings for twenty minutes the planning committee presents the week's activities to the class. This is conducted in a business-like manner with parliamentary rules of order being observed to bring about decisions for action in a democratic manner. The work of the class is planned for three-week periods, but each Monday

these business meetings set the pattern for the week.

Still another teacher has this to say:

I have used teacher-pupil planning when possible. These students want a part in planning their work. We try to follow the same methods used last summer—getting into groups with those having the same interests, and choosing leaders for the different groups; getting information and having discussions; coming back to the large group and reporting our findings.

The students enjoy this way of studying because each one has a definite responsibility. They study material which is of interest to them, and are not merely just doing something for the teacher. Pupils have much opportunity for democratic living.

The question of leadership has been consciously attacked by some teachers. One teacher considered such problems as this with one of her groups: "What should be my attitude toward the group leader? How can I work in a group most effectively? What is my responsibility when I take on a piece of work? When shall I seek help on my problem? How can I interest others in the things that interest me?" This teacher has developed leadership in her classes, and a sense of responsibility for one's own actions, to the point that she can be away from the building and the students carry on. She leaves her afternoon classes about twice a month to attend the curriculum planning committee meeting. Thus far they have managed their affairs quite well. She continues with this statement concerning leadership among teachers:

I definitely feel that the leadership in our schools determines to a large extent how far we can go in achieving decided goals. I have felt more at ease in experimenting with new techniques and employ-

ing democratic methods. This, I think, is basic in achieving high levels of human relationships.

One consultant who visited our workshop last summer left the thought with us that one of the ways of evaluating a learning experience is to ask, "Has this experience led to better learning, broader and deeper interests, richer living? Are we creating a richer life?" As we pose this question about the 1946 summer workshop, we think of three dramatic examples of the creativeness of this venture. (1) When our schools couldn't open in September because of a polio epidemic, workshop members were used to help organize and carry on a system-wide series of preschool conferences involving all Minneapolis teachers. These workshop members made their contribution in such a way that they were not set apart from any of the other teachers, but the fact that they were in there "pitching" helped make the preschool conferences click. (2) During the year other members of the school system have become sufficiently interested in summer workshops that the enrollment for the 1947 workshop is practically complete at this writing. (3) This semester Minneapolis has organized a series of in-service study programs which meet after school. Approximately twelve hundred of the two thousand teachers are enrolled for these courses in addition to a full day's teaching load.

#### The Teachers Summarize

Teachers are enthusiastic about the summer workshop. They feel it gave them an opportunity to work out practical classroom problems. Here is what some of them say:

I would like to say that living in the atmosphere of the summer workshop was the most inspirational experience I have ever had in my training. The fact that the principal of my building attended the same groups as I has helped to give me the feeling that there is a oneness of purpose in attempting to meet the needs of youngsters.

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The evaluation of the effect of the ideas and of the constructive changes made on my classes as a result of my attendance at the workshop is not a simple task. The effect has been on my students and that must be seen to be understood. Most noticeable of these effects is the change in attitude of my students concerning their own personal responsibility for their own conduct and achievement.

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In my district a number of elementary teachers attended the workshop this summer, therefore making them more alert to the pupil as an individual and to his or her difficulties. This in turn makes the principal more conscious of individual needs and the value of conferences with the teacher and visiting teacher.

No, we haven't all the answers. Teachers are confused. Some gripe. Others resist. But many of us believe: "Nothing outstanding is ever accomplished without distraction and confusion. You choose either the calm of the static regime or the general upset of creative adventure. It's the rare soul who can have both at the same time."

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## Let's Face the Facts—and Act!

BETTY MORGAN BOWEN

We present the following "extra," which we feel a strong compulsion to publish. This article was written by Betty Morgan Bowen, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, Pa., who spent some time in Germany and describes some of the existent conditions affecting children in that nation.

TWO YEARS after the end of the fighting in the town of Schaufenberg, Germany, the Schaufenberg Elementary School, where 390 children are enrolled, is still in very bad repair. The roof and the walls on the top floor are toppling, and rain pours into the building. The six classrooms still in use are musty and damp, and the floor boards are warped to four or five inches above their base. During heavy rainfalls water

drips onto the children as they sit at their desks.

Though the central heating system of Schaufenberg School has been repaired, and though coal could easily be supplied from the Schaufenberg Mines only a few hundred yards away, less than a ton of coal had been allocated to last at least six weeks into the winter of 1946.

The children attend school for two

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