A fourth use of teaching materials is to develop a wider range of interest or to arouse interest in new work. An exhibit of containers with false bottoms, abnormally thick glass, and misleading shapes, aroused the interest of a class in economics and led them to make a careful study of all types of fraudulent practices in merchandising.

Having the Tools Ready

Are you ready to guide children in needful learning experiences when you have utilized the resources available in the school and community? Are you ready when you see the practical relationships between the problem at hand and these resources? Are you ready when your teaching materials are sorted, filed, and stored in a convenient place in constant readiness for use? No! Not until you have inspired and guided pupils to participate in building and using the materials file are you truly ready.

A teacher is not a showman supported by artificial props. A teacher is an observer and guide of children, leading them to the solution of problems. Teaching materials are the tools.

**Human Materials Unlimited**

In an overview of materials of instruction we oftentimes overlook the personnel with whom we work. Helen F. Olson, head of the English Department, Queen Anne High School in Seattle, looks at these human materials from the standpoint of the resources within an individual classroom. She analyzes the things that children have to bring to a situation in terms of providing better learning environments for them.

I AM A LITTLE WEARY of the long arguments regarding which group of children should have the greatest attention. Is it more important to keep the mentally unfit and emotionally unbalanced out of the jails, insane asylums, and other institutions? Is the primary obligation to the unusually gifted child? Shall I teach the “average” child—whenever that may be—ignoring apathetic Sally because she is a little “queer” anyhow and brilliant George because he shows incipient signs of becoming a selfish and ruthless man?

Or is it my responsibility to make the range of my content and method such that it will serve all the young citizens under my guidance? If I answer yes to the last question, I am accepting a difficult role. Teaching everyone the same body of subject matter and failing him if he doesn’t learn it is easy. Directing teaching toward a certain group and letting the rest of the students take care of themselves is a fairly simple matter.

A Cross Section of Material

There is an infinite variety in the microcosm which is an average classroom. One senior English class of twenty-five, for instance, contains the following variations. A boy, son of a well-known surgeon, is himself planning to be a doctor. He is alert, able, interested in medicine and all that per-
tains to it but a little blase about other important phases of living. Already, at barely eighteen, he is too specialized in his interests. In the class is a girl, Sue, who is concerned primarily with social contacts. Sue is charming, friendly, and superficial. Ann, on the other hand, is emotionally unbalanced. Poor background and unhappy childhood experiences have united to make her different from the rest of the young people in reactions and manner and definitely anti-social. Beatrice has somehow managed to reach senior English without ever having had the experience of talking before a small group. As a consequence, she is abnormally shy. Charles, whose parents are well-to-do, wants training that will prepare him for Yale. He is brilliant and selfish. He wants all he can get out of the course but is impatient about those slower than himself. In the same class there is a boy who lives in a single room with his father and bedridden mother. Whatever verbal ability he ever had has long been lost through a series of emotional blockings. At age seventeen, he finds his success experience in making a poster for the classroom bulletin board.

These are six of the twenty-five students in one classroom. The other nineteen are equally different from one another in their needs. Here is the kind of cross section of interests, experiences, abilities, and ambitions to be found in any high-school classroom in the United States. Irma completely supports herself. Carole has never earned a dollar in her life and allows herself to be waited on at home. Henry is gay and carefree and friendly and able; Bill is quiet, serious, hard-working, and always willing to help others.

The Most Important Task

If the aim of secondary school education is to supply these individuals with a certain body of information, the task of the teacher is simple. He gives out the facts, and the class members endeavor to grasp and retain them—at least until the term test has been taken. If they fail to do so, they lose the credit and must repeat the course.

If, however, the responsibility of the teacher is to change behavior, to develop abilities, skills, habits of thinking and acting necessary to carry on the processes of a working democracy—then the treatment of the variety of personal resources available in any classroom is of tremendous and far-reaching importance. Fortunately, the time is now past when a teacher fails a boy in English who cannot analyze sentences but makes a clear, well-organized talk in industrial arts or wins an essay contest for social studies. There is still, however, far too little use of success experiences in one course to stimulate effort in another.

Interest Is the Dynamo

The interests of children can be used to further a planned program. There is little continuity in a program that is developed from day to day according to the whims and wishes of children. But why not use the interests and enthusiasm of young persons to further a program planned for their welfare?

Why not manage so that the students are on the teacher's side, rather than against him? Is it possible to let the students in on the goals of a course? What are the aims of a course, in terms that young people can understand and accept? What is the goal for the week?
Varied Incentives for Learning

Having established common goals toward which teacher and pupils are marching together, the next step is to make the interests of the students work to help reach the goals. Here is one example. The teacher is interested in having his pupils develop the habit of consulting the dictionary as one means toward improving oral and written vocabularies. He discusses with the class the value of vocabulary power in various in-school and out-of-school situations. He discovers ways in which some of the students have felt the need of a more varied vocabulary. He finds that George was embarrassed at his lack of ideas at the last De Molay meeting. Doris found conversing with her boy friend’s parents difficult when she went to dinner at his house. Paul knows how prominently vocabulary figures in the entrance test for Yale. Bob found it difficult to understand and, therefore, to follow the directions given at the airplane plant where he worked during the summer vacation. A discussion on the use of the dictionary in regard to vocabulary building is a “natural” in such problems. It is agreed that to use a dictionary effectively one has to have some understanding of how to use it.

All this takes time, you say. Yes, it does. The way having been prepared, however, the week of dictionary study becomes a vital experience for all. Each pupil has his own individual reason for wishing to learn the meaning of diacritical marks, punctuation key, main and secondary meanings, synonyms, antonyms, part-of-speech classifications. He shares with the teacher the conviction that this study is important to the goal of the course and also to his own purposes. The dictionary is only an example. The same technique can be applied to solving a problem in mathematics, learning the causes of the high cost of living, studying the elements of matter, making a dress or a table.

Talent Resources at Hand

More and more teachers are making use of the special talents and experiences of the members of the classes they teach. If a pupil has been to Europe, perhaps his experiences can be used to give him a feeling of poise and security as one who has contributed something of value, to add some useful information to the stockpile of the other members, or to suggest topics for oral and written work. The violinist can discuss the long training and self-discipline necessary to attain proficiency with this instrument. Perhaps he can demonstrate certain techniques. The boy who has an unusual speaking voice can demonstrate the special abilities needed for success in radio work, can play and discuss some records, can lead a symposium, perhaps can even assist in putting on a radio broadcast. The artistic student can supervise the arrangement of the bulletin board or make...
illustrative posters useful in connection with class work. Utilizing special talents in carrying forward a planned program vitalizes the class hour with a constant exchange of ideas important to the pupils and is a force toward making the class progress a cooperative effort of pupils and teacher.

Group Enthusiasm Utilized

The group instinct, the desire to be a good leader or a good follower, can be used to further a planned program. Recently a boy in a senior class was telling of the difficulty, last summer, of his scout master. The man was unable to keep the respect of the boys or to maintain any consistent discipline. The seventeen-year-old, who had served as assistant in the camp, analyzed the matter this way: "Mr. Lee doesn't understand boys. He thought the way to handle them was to carry the big stick. He didn't see that it was his manner that the boys resented. They wanted to be trusted to do the right thing and to have a part in enforcing the rules of the camp." Another boy was writing of the failure of the football coach in a nearby school. "The coach was too much of a dictator with the squad," wrote the student. "He didn't give the boys credit for wanting to win games. He was out to make them win, and they didn't like his attitude."

Can more of this group enthusiasm be utilized in the classroom? In one city high school there are thirty major school organizations, about fifty social groups of boys and girls, and more than a dozen out-of-school organizations for high school students in the community. Can this desire to work in groups and to follow a leader selected from one's fellows be used to make classroom experience more vital? Are teachers missing ways to develop citizenship and losing an opportunity to make discipline something imposed by the individual and the group?

Programs for Personal Development

Democracy succeeds as citizens of character, in their own small groups and insofar as they can, realize the highest development of their own potentialities. Life in the classroom is ceasing to be a preparation for citizenship and is becoming increasingly an experience in citizenship. Democracy, whether in a classroom or in a city or in the United States as a whole, does not always run smoothly. Inevitably, there is clash of will, clash of personalities all striving toward their goals.

Inevitably, also, as people of any age work together, they come to realize that the Four Freedoms are attained only through acceptance of four responsibilities—to respect another's opinion even though they despise his point of view; to understand and appreciate the character-building power of a religion different from their own; to work actively for peace in community, nation, and world; and to strive to perfect our economic system to the point that all groups in the country will have an opportunity to earn their fair share of the nation's wealth. As each member of a group learns to accept his responsibilities, he sees that only the superior individual will bring about a superior society. The educational program succeeds as it develops to the fullest extent possible the character, personality, and abilities of all the children served by its program.