

Are You Ready to Teach? ---

THELMA THORNE

A knowledge of all the resources at our disposal, planning to insure their readiness for use, and adaptation to needs of learners are three of the guides to use of materials in this article by Thelma Thorne, assistant professor of Home Economics Education at Washington State College, Pullman. Miss Thorne gives practical suggestions for the guidance of supervisors, in their capacity as resource persons, and classroom teachers as they work directly with children.

A BUSY TEACHER dashed into the faculty rest room one spring day, dug around in her locker for a minute, evidently without success, and looked hopelessly around the room. As she hurried out the door she called back, "I've lost something somewhere." Is that your state of mind when you start to assemble the teaching materials for a class? If it is, why not try five simple rules which, if followed, will help keep materials available when they are needed.

Organization for Availability

A continual evaluation of materials on hand plus the ability to discard those which are no longer useful. Ask yourself the following questions about each piece of teaching material before making it a part of your permanent file.

- Is it simple enough to be comprehensible?
- Is it attractive and thrilling enough to attract attention?
- Does it provide for all possible related learnings?



Courtesy Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

- If it is for bulletin board use is it visible from a distance?
- Does it set worthwhile standards?
- Is the information correct and clear?

Are you a good discarder? One teacher who makes use of a variety of teaching materials makes it a practice to go through her files every quarter and discard those items which have fallen into misuse. Make a note on the back of each piece of material indicating date of use, purpose served, and suggestions for future use. Don't be a hoarder! Keep your files active.

A simple filing system plus a determination to file each new piece of material as soon as it arrives. A good filing system expedites assembling of materials for a lesson and makes it possible for children to use materials and return them to their right place. Newspaper and magazine clippings which are to be used only a few times may be filed in large flapless envelopes made of butcher paper or in manila folders. More permanent articles should be mounted on butcher paper or colored paper and then filed in folders. Loose leaf folders marked with the index color of the main division, i. e., orange, indicating housing, and the name of the subdivision as "Zoning," protect bulletins and make them easily accessible.

Adequate bulletin board and display space plus a resolution to change the exhibit as soon as it has served its purpose. Are your bulletin boards "blind spots" with stagnant exhibits? Do pupils use the bulletin boards and other display areas as a medium through which they may share their ideas with other members of the class? Don't let lack of display space deprive pupils of this valuable experience. Cover sections of

slate in the blackboard with celotex or nail squares of celotex or cork to cupboard doors for bulletin boards. Movable screens made of wood veneer give reversible bulletin space. For a roll away display area replace the fabric of an old window blind with monk's cloth. This may be fastened to the top of the blackboard and rolled up when not in use.

Easily accessible storage space plus the perseverance to return materials to their right place when they are no longer in use. Bulletins in folders, as described above, store successfully on book shelves. Incidentally, twelve-inch boards nicely finished plus a few attractive bricks make very usable bookshelves. Apple crates, orange crates, or paper cartons painted a happy color make splendid filing cases. The storage of posters is always a problem. Shallow flat drawers work very well for the limp variety. The stiffer posters may be hung in a cupboard from which the shelves have been removed. The posters hang from ordinary coat hangers suspended from a pole which runs lengthwise of the cupboard. They are fastened to the hangers with clothes pins.

Constant alertness for new ideas plus the resourcefulness to use them in new situations. Have you a "suggestions file?" When you see an interesting bulletin board or exhibit make a sketch of it and write a brief description on a 3" x 5" card. Slip this in your file to await the day when you and your students need an idea. Did an idea for a geography lesson pop into your mind as you stood on the rim of Crater Lake this summer? Make a note of it for your file. That anecdote grandmother told about the Indians and the cornmeal

mush—don't trust your memory, put it in the file. Then there are the case situations such as Miss Brown used in discussing office conduct with her business practice class. Details of such experiences are apt to fade from memory over a period of time. Record such situations on cards for future reference as soon after they occur as possible. Every teacher will find anecdotal records of case situations pertinent to her field excellent resource material.

Planning to Insure Readiness

"You have the cutest ideas!" exclaimed Shirley, unable to restrain her enthusiasm longer. Miss Allison teasingly responded, "So you are interested?" as she flashed a quick smile at the enthusiastic youngster. The ninth grade girls had been skeptical the day before when she suggested a lesson on laundering in relation to good grooming. Now they were all attention and eagerly asking to bring some of their own garments to school to work on the next day. What had caused the change?

Let's look back for a moment at Miss Allison's planning and preparation. It began the day she met her pupils. It continued as she visited them in their homes and guided them in experiences at school.

Preparation for this lesson began when she purposely purchased a knitted slip and a satin slip and gave them equal wear and care. It began when she kept these articles in a state of repair so that they might be used immediately for teaching purposes. The art teacher who experiments with screen printing in her leisure time and saves examples of her efforts for teaching purposes is exemplifying the same degree of readiness.

Looking about You

Are you aware of the resources which are available to you and your pupils. Look at the homes of your pupils. Look around the school room. Look out your window. What vital experiences are available within view of the school? As I look out my window I see a small nursery. Nearby a village of pre-fab houses shows evidences of social planning. On the brow of the next hill the skeleton of a new building is silhouetted against the sky. Teaching resources? Yes. The young biologist may find the forest in the nursery while the future farmer studies at first hand the problem of soil erosion. Industrial arts and mathematics classes will find challenging problems in the house which is being built—all within eyesight of the school.

Capitalizing on Interests

Do you seize each opportunity to use community resources as teaching materials by building on pupil needs and interests? During a discussion in an English class a question was raised concerning airplanes. The stimulating discussion which followed indicated that the entire class would be interested in pursuing the subject further. In making tentative plans for this class the teacher had planned for letter writing and oral expression experiences. Quick to see, in the airplane problem, the possibility of guiding pupils in an experience which was vital to them, she helped them define their problem and make plans for solving it.

The class divided itself into groups according to their interests. One group made the arrangements for a trip to the local airport, another group invited a

well-known pilot to speak to the class. A number of the girls were interested in the possibility of becoming air hostesses. They corresponded with some of the large airlines and several hospitals to secure the needed information. Their final project was to present, during a vocations week, a film featuring the work of the air hostess. During the course of this experience numerous letters were written, a series of articles was planned and written for the local paper, several students had the opportunity to introduce speakers, townspeople were interviewed, a digest of current literature on airplanes was written, and pupils learned to discover and use resource materials to solve their problems.

Making Your Own Materials

But community resources must be supplemented by materials collected or prepared by pupils and teacher. One elementary school teacher returned from a vacation at a southern beach with a new book in which the life of three little scallops and their friends was described. She had collected shells to represent the scallops and examples of all the sea life portrayed in the story. The children in a midwestern town had their first real glimpse of the sea when they reconstructed the scene in the story with the sea life and sand which the teacher brought to them.

Pupils, too, should have an active share in developing teaching materials. A class in business English set their own standards for writing a business letter by making an evaluation scale using the letters that were written by various members of the class—ranging from the poorest to the best. Perhaps

one of the best ways for pupils working together in groups to share their findings with the remainder of the class is by means of posters—some to be kept on file.

Achieving Varied Learning

Teaching materials may be used to enrich pupil experience in many ways, one of which is *to interest a group in immediate learning*. Miss Allison was able to do this in the laundry lesson by using actual garments to show pupils how to make their own clothing more attractive. Another teacher found interest ran high in her office practice class when they considered real problems which the group had seen in a business situation.

A most important use of teaching materials is *to give information needed for the solution of a problem—to help perfect a skill, to show a technique, and to set standards of work*. Miss Allison, in her laundering demonstration, was giving pupils the information needed to solve their own problems. She demonstrated several techniques of work, as in the instance of mending the slip, and helped students set their own standards through the illustration of the patches on the two blouses. When students brought their own garments to school for repair the following day, samples showing the steps in patching a garment helped them perfect this skill.

To broaden the scope of learning by calling attention to new applications is a third use for teaching materials. The pupil who is led to discover and solve geometrical problems in many phases of living will see the practicability of his work and will continue to use it throughout his life.

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

HELEN F. OLSON

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—whoever 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-

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