

# Tools for Learning

## SKILL IN LIVING

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IF WE WISHED to cite an excellent illustration of semantics, one of the best terms to be found would be the word *skills*. Instantly, the term calls to mind a wide range of connotations—from the extremely narrow interpretation of academic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic to the broader implications of social skills in cooperative living and of creative skills in self-expression.

In any consideration of skills for today's world, all three types of skills, academic, social, and creative, should be included. But they are not to be thought of as separate and unrelated aspects of the child's learning program. In truth, in today's classroom, they cannot be isolated. They are closely related elements of an integrated program of functional learning; a program in which academic, social, and creative skills are effectively interwoven in a pattern of purposeful learning.

Does the child of today need to develop skill in the three R's? Most certainly he does! He lives in a world in which the interpretation of the printed page, the communication of ideas by both the spoken and written word, and the manipulation of numbers are pressing needs of intelligent living. These needs exist not only in adult life, but also in child life. Therefore, the development of skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic may be directly related to the child's purposeful reading of the printed page, to his own need for expressing and communicating his thoughts and feelings, and to the solving of number computations within the realm of his experience and understanding.

In today's world the increasing dissemination of ideas, of opinions, of propaganda, and of advertisements by means of books, magazines, newspapers, movies, and

the radio makes it incumbent upon the school to give training in the ability to read discriminatingly, to listen critically, to view thoughtfully, to speak clearly, and to draw conclusions intelligently. We need greater competence to face today's world of complex activity and increased responsibility; therefore, specific training is required in interpreting the spoken and written word, in expressing thoughts and feelings with clarity, and in performing accurately the computations of everyday economic living. If this training is to be effective and meaningful to the child, it should be functional. There should be purpose in his reading, in his communication, and in his computation.

This does not mean that there is no place in the program for drill exercises and for survey and diagnostic tests. In using such exercises and tests, however, they should be made purposeful to the child by showing him how they will contribute to his growth in important academic skills. Specific guidance in the development and improvement of academic skills may be found in current articles and books relating to the basic school subjects.

In considering skills for today's world, the development of social skills should receive emphasis in the child's program. In a world in which the need for cooperation with our fellowman becomes increasingly apparent, social skills are of utmost importance. For help in promoting such skills, these references are recommended:

*Schools for a New World*, Twenty-Fifth Yearbook of the American Association of School Administrators, 1947.

*Spiritual Values in the Elementary School*, Twenty-Sixth Yearbook of the Department of Elementary School Principals, 1947.

The development of creative skills, through opportunities for self-expression in painting, drawing, writing, music, and handwork of all kinds, is a vital part of today's threefold program of skills. In an age in which tensions and fears are contributing to the disintegration of human personality, the individual will find therapy and personal satisfaction in wholesome channels of self-expression. No program of skills for today's world can be adequate unless the program includes individual work periods, the development of hobbies, and the organization of club activities.

Practical help and guidance for such development may be found in these references:

*A Boy's Treasury of Things-to-do* by Caroline Horowitz. Hart Publishing Company, 1946.

*A Girl's Treasury of Things-to-do* by Caroline Horowitz. Hart Publishing Company, 1946.

*Woodworking Crafts* by Raymond Van Tassel. D. Van Nostrand Company, 1947.

*The Book of Nature Hobbies* by Ted Pettit. Didier, 1947.

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