

Guides to Methods and Materials

What are the tools particularly fitted for carrying on guidance programs? Are there special techniques I should know about? Where can I find more materials? The authors of the three articles which follow give answers to all these problems. Suggested techniques for improving the quality of learning; an objective treatment of the place of varied procedures, tests, and methods; and a comprehensive bibliography of further sources of information are included in this section.



Courtesy Battle Creek (Mich.) Schools

Eliminating Blocks to Learning

KATHRYN FEYEREISEN

Some blocks to learning and the treatment for removing them are described here by Kathryn Feyereisen, assistant professor of education at Wayne University, Detroit, Michigan.

ALMOST UNIVERSALLY, teachers, principals, and supervisors believe that a superior quality of classroom guidance will ultimately produce a superior quality of learning in the school. There is less agreement, however, about the ways in which it may be accomplished.

Some educators attempt to improve learning by placing major emphasis on the improvement of reading, arithmetic, and other skills. They allow the findings from intensive studies of the mechanics involved in these skills to take precedence over all other con-

siderations in their teaching procedures and assume that this kind of guidance is the most significant part of teaching. For example, when a ten-year-old child experiences difficulty in learning to read, these teachers suggest getting a tutor for him or putting him into a remedial class where the defects in the logically and sequentially organized system can be remedied to produce ten-year-old reading performance. They assume such action to be a part of classroom guidance for the child.

Other educators maintain that the approach to classroom guidance lies in providing an interesting and stimulating environment where learning takes place incidentally. Those children who are not ready for certain learnings may take time to mature sufficiently for readiness to develop. In this approach the chief function of the teacher is that of arranging the kinds of experiences through which each child may become ready for learning those skills, attitudes, and habits which function in life situations.

Both of these concepts, less rigidly conceived and interpreted, may become part of a broader concept of the ways in which desirable learnings may best take place. This more expanded concept requires a clarification of the learnings to be improved; an understanding of cause-and-effect relationships in learning and non-learning; and a variety of techniques, procedures, or treatments which may be utilized in satisfying needs and removing blocks to learning.

VALUES GOVERN OPERATION

In planning for classroom guidance, it is necessary to come to a decision

regarding the central purpose of elementary education and the specific values which guide teachers in working with children. If one accepts the idea that the role of the school is to develop individuals who are capable of perpetuating, refining, and improving the quality of democratic living, he must project the values he considers most important. Illustrative of "the broader concept of method" are these: (1) clarifying values, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions upon which individuals and groups are acting; (2) developing self-direction; (3) helping children to understand the social structure and social processes; (4) guiding children in the learning of skills which are needed in meeting living requirements; and (5) helping children to use the arts daily in ways that are creatively significant to themselves and society.¹

Needless to say, the educational objectives of the school can be realized only to the extent that teachers are capable of living with children so as to bring about the desired outcomes. The teacher is the key person in putting into operation the processes by which children can come to lead personally satisfying and socially useful lives in the school and in the society. Teachers must understand the needs and motivation which underlie behavior, and they must be skillful in redirecting unwholesome behavior into channels which are acceptable to society as well as satisfactory to the child. Teachers must discover possible causes of non-learning and devise treatment for removing blocks to learning. This is an exceedingly intricate and complicated job for

¹Louis E. Raths, Graduate Seminar, Ohio State University, 1946.

the skilled and competent professionally-trained teacher.

BLOCKS TO LEARNING

Having agreed upon the objectives of the guidance program, the next step would seem to be that of examining critically some causes of non-learning in the school. Newer theories imply that the causes are multiple and inter-related and involve the whole personality of the individual and the nature of his environment. Rath² identifies some of these causes: frustrated emotional needs, conflicts in values, intense personal problems, over-loaded life schedules, poor health, remoteness of goals, the social structure, and environmental blocks.

Such vital factors as interest, motive, and purpose, related to the satisfaction or the thwarting of emotional needs, are thought to have a direct bearing upon wholehearted effort in goal achievement. Conflicts in values apparent between members of the socio-economic levels in the class structure are thought to produce confusion and dissatisfaction in the lives of children and to be a destructive influence upon learning. When worries about home and family become over-burdening to children, they may affect the quality of learning in the school. When too much of living is crowded into the child's twenty-four hour schedule, he may become overwhelmed with the variety of activities claiming his time and energies to the detriment of learning in the school. Poor health has long been considered a cause of non-learning and yet little evidence has been obtained

to show the direct bearing of under-nourishment, or diseased tonsils, or other infections upon the learning of reading or arithmetic. When children engage in activities which seem to have no useful purpose or vital interest to them, when the goals are remote and even out of reach, there is question that much learning can result.

There is evidence in research to show a direct relationship between social acceptability and socio-economic status of children in the public schools, and the implication is that the social structure may have deleterious effects upon learning in some cases. Likewise, environmental blocks may include arrangements or circumstances in which a child finds himself under the jurisdiction of too many adults in the home, or in which he lives in crowded quarters, is deprived of outdoor play arrangements, is faced with the loss of a parent, or is moved about from school to school. It is a part of classroom guidance to give these blocks serious consideration in designing school living.

TREATMENT FOR REMOVING LEARNING BLOCKS

Thus far, in planning for better guidance in the classroom, the teacher has formulated objectives and studied behavior in terms of possible causation of non-learning. So much has been written about what may be done to further the growth and development of the child who learns easily and well, that the emphasis here is placed on what to do with those children who seem to be blocked in their learning and who are considered more or less as misfits in school. The kinds of treatment or therapy can be applied with groups

² Louis E. Rath and Graduate Students at Ohio State University, 1946.

and with individuals as needed. Some of them have their origins in clinical psychology and have not been employed widely in classrooms or modified for purposes of school living. They are offered, not as patterns to be followed in any situation, but as suggestive of what may be involved in the process of meeting needs and removing blocks to learning that may be caused by repeated thwarting of needs.

Direct Needs Therapy

This treatment means a direct effort to meet, insofar as possible in the school situation, the child's need for belonging, achievement, economic security, freedom from overburdening fear and guilt, love and affection, sharing in decisions which concern his welfare, understanding the world, and developing common concerns.

Some critics say that in terms of clarity of analysis, direct needs therapy is not a separate kind of treatment but that it permeates the entire process of meeting needs. Used experimentally it has been found to be of value in contributing to a point of view regarding treatment. It means that the teacher recognizes the uniqueness of every child, that behavior is caused and that the causal factors may lie in the early life of the child, that the child develops according to his own rate of growth, that each child must be accepted emotionally as he is, and that each child is considered educable and worthy of the teacher's best efforts in school living.

Direct Experience Therapy

Through this treatment the teacher attempts to arrange opportunities for the child to experience emotional satisfactions. The teacher sets the stage so

that children interact in such a way as to bring success in human relationships.

Through experience treatment the child may, at times, meet mild frustration on such occasions when he makes wrong choices in dealing with his age-mates. Since this is considered a part of the learning process for him, he is guided in such a way that it becomes clear to him how his actions brought failure. He is then given opportunities to try again for more successful outcomes. This type of treatment is arranged in such a way as to make the means of achieving goals, and directing purposes toward socially accepted ways of achieving them, important to children. He learns to sense the relationship of means to ends in all that he does.

Non-Directive Therapy

Developed by Carl Rogers, this therapy is used in clinical counseling. It involves the creation of a free, permissive situation—one in which the counselor or the teacher does not probe, pass judgments, make suggestions, or give advice, but allows the child freedom to express whatever is uppermost in his mind. Feelings, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs may be expressed freely in an atmosphere of trust and confidence. The teacher may reflect back to the child his feelings and attitudes without interpreting or censoring them. In the counseling situation the child is completely free to talk about anything he wishes and to express feelings without fear that he will be punished or that his statements might be repeated.

The time is set for the counseling period, and limits are placed in advance. For example, if the period is to be a half-hour, the child knows that

he has just a half-hour to say anything he pleases. It is important that there be strict adherence to the limits of the time set in advance. At the close of the period the teacher may ask the child if he wishes to come again to talk about his problems, and if he does, the time and place are agreed upon. It is significant to note that in non-directive therapy the child is free to express feelings, anxieties, and worries in a situation where they are accepted and reflected back to him without interpretation, questions, or indictments. His problems remain his to work out as he recognizes what he feels. Problems of the child do not become the problems of the teacher to be worked out at her direction. Catharsis is the initial phase of the non-directive therapeutic experience, and it precedes clarification and insight on the part of the child in regard to his behavior.

Value-Analysis Treatment

In using this therapy the teacher may face the child with an interpretation. She does not claim that her interpretation is the correct one or that it is the only construction of his attitudes and values. She may say to a child, "It seems to me that when younger children are in trouble on the playground, you usually try to help them get a fair deal. When you are on safety patrol, you are friendly and kind to the kindergarten boys and girls. When little children come into the corridors with snow on their clothing, you help them brush it off before they go into their classrooms. These things seem to indicate that you think it is a good thing to be helpful to younger children. Is this right?"

Or she may say, "Tom, you seem to show by your behavior that you like to run in the halls; you tear down the stairways on the left side of the steps; you push other children out of your way at the drinking fountain; and sometimes you slam the door in other children's faces. These things suggest that you believe a person should think only of himself. He doesn't have an obligation to consider the rights of others. He doesn't have to abide by the agreements of the group. Others do, but you do not have to. Is this the way you feel about it? Is this what you are trying to show?" This is a part of the clarifying function of teaching through the technique of value-analysis.

Environmental Therapy

Making use of environmental resources to satisfy needs is involved in this treatment. It means changing not only the material environment but also groupings of children. Color and harmony in the arrangement of the classroom is considered here. Children can help make plans for improving the comfort and beauty of the school. Not only are the classrooms considered in this respect, but the entire school building, since both are equally important aspects of the child's total environment.

Likewise the personnel in the school is considered—other teachers, the principal, matron, cafeteria workers, and custodians. People in the community are welcomed into the school as they contribute to the on-going activities. Parents come and go with ease and familiarity. Purposeful effort to make the best use of such resources is a part of environmental therapy.

Direct Guidance Therapy

Planning is the key word in this treatment. It involves planning with groups of children for the tasks they undertake, as well as laying out a course for action to insure success in the development of skill and competence in problem solving. Sometimes arbitrary decisions must be made by the teacher to insure the safety of children; but, in general, the children can help to shape group policy. This does not mean that they do as they wish in every case, but that they give thoughtful consideration to the problems, offer suggestions as to possible solutions, weigh the values involved, project consequences, and come to a consensus through this process. Direct help is given by the teacher when it is requested as children work on individual problems.

This treatment may include a direct effort to evaluate with children what they have done, to help them see the results of the work and planning, to find defects in it, and to make better suggestions from the new vantage point. This does not mean that the teacher does the evaluating, but that she provides the opportunities for children to discuss the products of their activities in such a way as to bring growth in the process of evaluating. It further means pointing out other possibilities for subsequent experiences in related fields.

Time and time again children bring quarrels and fights into the classroom from the playground or gymnasium, and it is inevitable that their feelings of bitterness and resentment toward some individuals come with them. The teacher helps the children deal with such situations by making suggestions

as to how the difficulty can be settled before the children attempt to go on with their work. At times she may suggest that the children sit at an unoccupied table and discuss their trouble. She may or may not enter the conciliatory conferences of the children, since they are competent in many cases to arbitrate without adult help. She may ask them to let her know their decisions, and again, she may just notice when matters seem to be cleared to the satisfaction of everyone. In this way the teacher makes it possible for emotional tensions to relax through first giving them a chance to break out into the open and then be resolved in rational consideration of the problem where feelings are verbalized.

Skills Therapy

Since it is the job of the school to help children develop skills to do the tasks required in living, the teacher must help them gain such skills at their own developmental levels. The need to achieve implies that children must attain some degree of success in tasks they set for themselves. They want to learn to meet the requirements of situations, and they want to acquire the skills that will help them do this. Skills are developed in relation to the child's purposes, drives, interests, and emotional needs. Skills may be taught out of this relationship, but it is doubtful that they are learned.

The older view regarding skills was that they could be taught best by direct instruction, drill, and practice without taking into account the factor of purpose. This older view regarding the learning skills was based on the doctrines of formal discipline and

specific objectives which have been shown to be untenable. Regarding the acquisition of skills, Prescott states:

"No reasonable person will deny the high desirability of training our children to use language accurately and effectively, to understand quantitative relationships, and to manipulate figures speedily and accurately. But a good deal of evidence exists that these skills can be acquired most easily and rapidly as by-products of other activities and experiences. When children are eager to find out and express something which seems vitally important to their own lives, because it touches one or another of their personality needs, they are quick to acquire the number and language skills that will help them learn and assimilate experience."³

Skills therapy operates when teachers guide experiences in the school so that meaningful relationships are seen by the children and so that skills are learned functionally in experience. Repressive techniques for the acquisition of skills are rejected as harmful to the growing personalities of children and as frustrating to their emotional needs.

Role Therapy

Role therapy originated from the use of psychodrama as a catharsis for getting rid of tensions and residual feelings which block learning. The work of Moreno and Jennings are outstanding in this treatment dealing with spontaneity and flexibility of personality.⁴ In role therapy, situations may be set up in which children play a

number of unrehearsed roles in scenes which are similar to the problems faced in living. Usually the roles are self-chosen. This is a way of helping children feel as another probably feels in a given situation which is problematic.

Not only the players, but also the audience participates in psychodrama. The director is active and leads the movement of the acting while at the same time he keeps the interest of the members of the audience in a state of absorbed attention during the entire performance. When the scene has been acted, the teacher or director analyzes with the children the course of the action.

For example, a scene might be acted where a visiting baseball team played a game with the school team. At the game some of the children from the home school "booed" the players of the rival school. The problem might be taken up through the use of psychodrama where a group of children act out the episode of the "booing." Since the action is kept fluid and moving at a rapid rate, children may become angry and say cutting things to each other in acting the situation. An angry retort usually brings forth the same type of response from other children and the quarrel gets worse instead of better.

When the acting stops, the statements of individuals are examined in terms of their consequences in the situation. The teacher or director may ask questions such as, "When Jerry said, 'Take your team back to the woods,' how did you feel? What did you reply? How did the reply help or hinder the situation?"

Several children may be called upon

³ Daniel Prescott, *Emotion and the Educative Process*. Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1938, p. 213.

⁴ Moreno, J. L., and Jennings, H. H., "Advances in Sociometric Technique." *Sociometric Review*. Hudson, N. Y.: New York State Training School for Girls, 1936. Now available as *Sociometric Control Studies of Grouping and Regrouping, Sociometry Monographs*, No. 7. New York: Beacon House, 1945.

to act the same situation, and roles may be reversed to give many children opportunities to experience the feelings of the characters in the drama. This means has been called a way of educating emotions. There is some question whether this method should be used with very young children.

Shock Therapy

There are times when something startling should be done to improve behavior in a situation. When one looks over his own developmental experiences, he can recount a few instances in which a shock helped to clarify values or improve situations in some way. In general, this treatment should be used sparingly and with caution at such times as the teacher has thought through the consequences of the treatment to the individual personality. In general, it should not be used in anger or thoughtlessly on the part of the teacher. When it is used, it should be followed with other kinds of therapy to assure integrative effects to personality.

Rest Therapy

There are times when a child becomes fatigued and needs rest more than he needs the planned routine of the school day. Many children do not get sufficient sleep at home—many have unsatisfactory sleeping arrangements. Although most schools are not equipped for resting, there are usually ways to arrange for a child to rest in some quiet place.

Where such an arrangement is made, it is often wise for a teacher to allow a child to take a nap or lie quietly for a time during the school day. When a child is having trouble in his human

relationships and when everything seems wrong for him, rest treatment may help to restore his equilibrium. It is hoped that newer school buildings will be constructed with this need in mind.

Bibliotherapy

This treatment involves the use of reading for therapeutic purposes. Books, if carefully selected, may help a child see his counterpart in a story, thus identifying himself with another individual or group having the same anxieties and facing the same problems in living. The child follows the fictional characters and sees ways in which they arrive at successful solutions to problems, how they resolve their inner conflicts to make happy adjustments. This type of treatment may be either preventive or corrective.

Counseling may or may not accompany the reading of the books. Teachers use wise judgments as to when a child is ready to discuss a book read for therapeutic purposes. The caution should be given that the teacher does not attempt to change behavior by prescribing moralizing stories. This is not the purpose of bibliotherapy. It is in the process of identification that the technique finds its sound psychological basis for therapy.

Medical Therapy

Teachers become sensitive to the need of a child for medical treatment. They notice when a child has infected tonsils or when he suffers from infections and organic disorders of many kinds. They notice when a child does not gain weight over an extended period of time. They observe visual and

hearing difficulties. In such cases, they refer the child and his parents to the proper medical authorities.

Though teachers are not responsible for medical therapy, they may be instrumental in getting the child to the proper persons for treatment. School physicians have suggested that the teacher be responsible for gathering data for the case history preceding referrals of children to them for examination and treatment.

RESEARCH INDICATES IMPROVED LEARNING

In a study made during the school year of 1946-47 at Phillips and Willard Elementary Schools in Des Moines, Iowa, the above processes were put into operation in experimental third, fourth, and fifth grade groups. As a result of organized efforts to satisfy some of the emotional needs of eight, nine, ten, and

eleven-year-old children in the classrooms, significant gains were made in reading and arithmetic performance, social acceptability, mental maturity, and general school effectiveness. Space does not permit including here the verifying data; but evidence was brought to bear on the hypothesis that as organized efforts are made to satisfy the emotional needs of pre-adolescents in ordinary classroom situations, learning is improved and its quality enriched.

Teachers who try to understand children's needs and who are successfully using the therapies described here carefully avoid dogmatic application of these treatments in classroom guidance. Rather, they find that in the situational demands of everyday school living each kind of treatment becomes a "natural" to an understanding and skillful teacher who is, above all things, truly a companion and friend to children.

Varied Techniques for Teachers _____

RUTH STRANG

These guidance techniques are presented by Ruth Strang, a professor of education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

UNLESS CUMULATIVE RECORDS, tests, and other techniques contribute to the main purpose of a guidance program, they are worse than useless. This purpose may be stated very simply: *to help every pupil discover and develop his best potentialities for his personal happiness and social usefulness.*

Under present conditions large numbers of children do not realize their potentialities; they fail to use the resources within themselves to make the most of themselves. This indicates the need for guidance services.

If we analyze the simple statement of purpose given above, we find it falls into three main parts:

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