

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:

To help every pupil discover his potentialities—*this is the child study part of the process*

To provide the experiences needed by every pupil—*this is the curriculum aspect*

To help every pupil choose, secure, and succeed in the experiences he needs—*this is the guidance emphasis.*

USE OF TECHNIQUES IN CHILD STUDY AND GUIDANCE

Watching the Child at Work

The most widely used technique is observation. Every teacher uses it to some extent. Even the harrassed teacher who teaches a class of forty pupils in a formal type of school learns something about individual pupils from being with them for at least one period a day.

The teacher who has had training in guidance techniques will make more significant and systematic observations. He will have an idea of what kind of behavior is likely to be most significant from the standpoint of child and adolescent development. With this knowledge in mind he will note pupils' relationship with adults and with other boys and girls; their response to criticism, failure, frustration; their interests and special abilities; evidences of their initiative and responsibility; their work habits and learning ability. He will be aware of the kind of first impression pupils make on him, because first impressions are important in initiating a circular response of relationships. In brief, the teacher will learn from observation alone a great deal about individual children in his class.

Teachers vary greatly in the extent and quality of their understanding of children. If a visitor asks a number of teachers, "What do you know about so-and-so?" indicating a particular pupil, he will find some teachers who merely say, "He's lazy," or "He doesn't make any trouble."

Another teacher gives the following detailed information: "Oh, that boy is very much concerned about his grades; he stops at my desk every day to ask how he is doing. He was very dissatisfied with 'C' on his report card last quarter. He showed me his marks on other cards, which were mostly 'B's.' He says his father 'really gets after him when he doesn't make all 'B's' at least.' One period I observed him for fifteen minutes while the class was having a study period. This is the record I jotted down:

- 11:00—Looked around the room.
- 11:01—Worked on his notebook, copying from text into his notebook.
- 11:04—Talked with girl across the aisle.
- 11:06—Dropped books on the floor.
- 11:07—Picked up books.
- 11:09—Looked for something in his desk.
- 11:11—Talked to boy in front of him.

"Of the fifteen minutes, he spent only three minutes in study—or what seemed to be study. This detailed observation confirmed my general impression that he wasted most of his study period. His span of attention is short. He seems to have a language difficulty, but this does not prevent his talking to other pupils. He depends on rote memory rather than giving the thought in his own words. He frequently stutters and shows jerky movements of the head.

His nervousness may be partly due to parent pressure. It seems to me his father is expecting a higher quality of work than the boy can do. I find him a likeable boy and feel that I should be doing more to help him."

These observations are good as far as they go; they have a number of strong points. The teacher's relationship with the boy was apparently friendly. She liked him and he was not afraid to tell her a little about his father's attitude toward his school grades. She noted a language and speech difficulty, and attempted a more detailed check on his study habits than most teachers make. She went beyond objective observation to speculate about the reason for his "nervousness."

At this point, however, the teacher was not prepared to go further. Without background in the dynamics of child behavior and guidance, she does not know what the facts mean nor what use she can make of them.

Confirming Impression with Fact

She feels the need of a check on her impression that the father is expecting the boy to do school work beyond his ability. The Binet test administered by a trained psychologist would help her to answer her question about the boy's potential mental ability. Teachers' estimates of pupils' intelligence are inaccurate—at least they do not correspond with the results of intelligence tests. In some instances, the teacher may have made a better estimate than the test of the individual's day-by-day functioning intelligence, but it would be helpful for her to know whether he could do better under the favorable

conditions of individual testing. Even a test such as the California Test of Mental Maturity, that yields both a verbal and a performance score, would give her a better basis for knowing whether the boy could do better academic work if he would put forth more effort.

Most of the observations teachers make are never recorded. They are used immediately in helping a pupil, or they may form part of the teacher's general impression of the individual.

Unrecorded observations fall short of maximum usefulness. They do not show trends in mental, physical, social, and emotional development. They do not clearly show relationships of factors in any one period of time, as, for example, the relationship between a slump in school work and parents' getting a divorce, a serious illness, or an exacting part-time job. If parents come to discuss their child's school progress, the teacher cannot supply enough evidence to present a convincing developmental picture. Moreover, it is patently impossible for a teacher to remember all the personal data useful in understanding thirty or forty pupils.

Trends Are Apparent

Here's where the cumulative record comes in. Recording facts about the family background, test results, marks, work experience, leisure-time activities and interests, special accomplishments, health, educational and vocational goals or plans, and personality tendencies as different teachers have observed them is not an impossible task for a grade teacher, a teacher-counselor, or a home-room teacher who serves as counselor

for thirty or forty pupils. Reading across the usual cumulative record card, the teacher can see trends from year to year. Reading down, he can see relationships among school achievement, health, intelligence as measured by tests, and other factors.

Recently the question has been insistently asked: Are cumulative records necessary? Can one not get more vital information by interviewing the pupil? Does he not have the resources within himself to understand himself and to realize his potentialities?

While realizing the values of the non-directive or client-centered interview, we do not think it should be used exclusively in school situations. In the first place, it takes more hours than the teacher counselor could possibly devote to interviewing; in the second, the non-directive approach is not suitable to some individuals. And third, many problems of educational guidance, reading difficulty, and vocational guidance require special diagnostic procedures and information.

In fact, in any kind of case, the cumulative record gives the interviewer a running start—an initial background for understanding the pupil. With this factual knowledge, the interviewer is able to reflect more accurately and realistically the feelings and insights that the pupil expresses. The pupil takes the responsibility for gaining a better understanding of himself, of his relationships, and of the world in which he lives. It is the role of the counselor to facilitate this process. By means of test results and other information on previously consulted cumulative records, both counselor and counselee are helped to move forward in their thinking and planning.

Pointers from Outside the Classroom

Observation of pupils' social relations may be extended by means of the sociometric technique. This is a simple device for recording pupils' choices of the persons with whom they would like to be associated in some real activity. When the choices are charted, it is easy to see who are chosen by many and who are chosen by none and rejected by many.

The teacher's impressions of the parents gained from conversation with the pupil may be far from reality. He may have given a distorted picture of the parents and their relations to him. Although it is very important for the teacher to get into the pupil's world and see it through his eyes, there is danger in not having a first-hand knowledge of the family. For this, social work skills are most valuable.

These are only a few examples of how techniques of child study aid teachers in understanding their pupils as persons in a social environment.

USE OF TECHNIQUES IN CURRICULUM REVISION

If information is collected through observation, testing, and other techniques, it certainly should be used in curriculum revision as well as in guidance. What better way could there be of providing all the pupils with the experiences they need than by systematically studying their cumulative records? Their scores on reading tests indicate the wide range of interest and difficulty needed in the books that are provided for them. The data on home background suggests real problems of living that pupils should learn to solve

in school. Their educational and vocational plans show special kinds of training that are needed. By means of this close alliance with child study and guidance, persons concerned with the curriculum can be sure that a "lush environment" is provided for all the pupils.

HOW TO IMPROVE THE USE OF TECHNIQUES

Observation, tests, interviews, and cumulative records are all used in schools to some extent, but few teachers have learned to use them skillfully. This is not the fault of teachers; they have had little or no preparation for their guidance work.

Prepare Teachers to Guide

In teachers colleges, students should have instruction and practice in observation, in the interpretation and use of test results and cumulative records, and in interviewing. Prospective teachers can observe children in films or real children in classes or clubs; write anecdotal records of the most significant behavior; discuss, criticize, and suggest ways in which their observation can be improved.

A real cumulative record can be mimeographed and given to every member of the teachers college class to study with different questions in mind. What kind of a pupil is described in the rec-

ord? What are his needs for guidance? What special abilities and talents has he? What can the school do to help him develop his potentialities? Recorded interviews¹ can be dramatized as a springboard for the discussion of the technique of interviewing.

The sociodramatic or role playing technique is useful in bridging the gap between knowledge of what to do and actual facility in doing it. A situation involving guidance is selected and made as real as possible to the persons playing the roles and to the audience. For example, the situation selected might be that of a new teacher visiting the home of one of her "problem pupils" at the beginning of the school year. One person plays the role of the mother and others in turn play the role of the teacher. The group has the opportunity to see how different persons handle the situation. The discussion that follows brings out important principles and procedures of interviewing.

Similar methods—films, dramatizations, role playing, practice in observation and interviewing, analysis and synthesis of data on cumulative records, and discussion—may all be used in helping teachers-in-service to improve the quality of their counseling and group work.

¹Strang, Ruth. *Educational Guidance: Its Principles and Practice*, Chapter VI. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947.

The Community School

Accounts wanted! The committee responsible for a publication on the community school is asking the ASCD membership and readers of EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP to help in the preparation by supplying accounts. Details of the type of material needed are given in the April News Exchange. If you did not receive an April News Exchange, send to the ASCD office for a copy. Won't you help this committee by supplying material? Thank you.

Copyright © 1948 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.