

Teachers for All American Youth

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That the essentials necessary in the education of teachers for universal secondary schools, outlined here by J. Paul Leonard, president of San Francisco State College, are sound will be a matter of general professional agreement. That they are not included in most present programs of education for prospective secondary teachers is certainly a fact. Here, as in so many other aspects of education, our major task is to put into action those practices which we believe are necessary to the improved education of youth.

THE AMERICAN DREAM, even if it has as many interpretations as there are citizens, is probably the most potent idealistic force in America today. The goals of democracy were written into the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. They have been declared on the platform of every political party, and they have been taught in every schoolroom and at every mother's knee. The universality of the dream is its most dynamic power, and the word *every* holds out a strange lure to move to action the highest and the lowest of men. James Truslow Adams, in his *Epic of America*, expresses our national wish as being a desire for "a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for *every* man, with opportunity for *each* according to his ability and achievement."

Whether we like it or not, education has been expected to make a fuller and richer life for all and to set the example for treating each individual according to his ability. Verily, we have boasted that we could do it through modern education *if*—and the *if* has been the subject of speeches, conventions, conferences, and legislative enact-

ments. Education has always appealed to the common man. Professionally we have sold him the idea that education is power, and he has come to believe that we can set up a program to help him realize the goals of democracy.

THESE GOALS BELONG TO ALL

One of our most recent attempts at this is the Bill of Rights for a New Age proposed by the Committee on Social and Economic Goals for Americans, sponsored by the National Education Association. You are doubtless familiar with these. Let me merely list them to have them before us:

1. *Hereditary strength.* Everyone has the right to be well born and under conditions which will conserve his innate strengths and capacities.
2. *Physical security.* Everyone has a right to protection from accident and disease.
3. *Participation in an evolving culture.* Everyone has a right to share the skills, standards, values, and knowledge of the race.
4. *An active, flexible personality.* Everyone has a right to conditions which foster the development of initiative, ability to weigh facts, resist judgment, and act cooperatively.

5. *Suitable occupation.* Everyone has a right to whatever joy the most fitting work can bring.
6. *Economic security.* Everyone has a right to a minimum income that will provide a reasonable standard of living.
7. *Mental security.* Everyone has a right to trustworthy information from unprejudiced, unbiased sources.
8. *Equality of opportunity.* Everyone has a right to the fullest possible development.
9. *Freedom.* Everyone has a right to the widest sphere of freedom compatible with the equal freedom of others.
10. *Fair play.* Everyone has a right to expect others to act in conformity with the highest good of all.

EDUCATION TO REALIZE THE GOALS

If we are to realize these goals we must look at them from the angle of the materials of instruction and from the angle of the one who instructs. Too long our schools have been fashioned on the notion that there is a body of material to be handed to the young on the one hand, and that there is a teacher to do the indoctrination on the other.

As long as this dichotomy continues there will be no valid universal secondary education. Youth are anxious to realize through education the goals of democracy and, at the same time, they realize that education is ineffective unless it is so planned that opportunities for learning will be equalized among them. The fiction of equality should be tempered with the understanding of individual capacities. We need to learn that education for all does not mean that all should have the same education. Democracy thrives on differences. Education seeks to develop differences. Our expectation of uniform achievement in school, often reflected in curriculum

patterns or standards or state adopted courses or uniform textbooks, is contrary to the principle of universal education and to the democratic principles of living.

Herein lies one of the greatest curriculum errors, as well as one of the important errors in the training of teachers. *We cannot have uniform performance and universal education.* We must sacrifice one or the other. An individual needs to be like others in only a few abilities. In other ways he needs to be unique. Dewey's idea that "Man's equality lies in distinction made universal" expresses the point well. Universal education does not require that we extend the same advantages to all, but, as Dewey puts it, that we devise an educational program "which meets the immense variety of social needs and of individual capacities and wants." Here, then, is the cue for our immediate professional responsibility—a curriculum program to meet the variety of social needs, individual capacities and wants, and a teacher skilled in understanding the differences that exist among youth and trained to meet them at the proper time with the proper instructional materials.

As far as the curriculum is concerned, we may say that those who prepare it must assume four things at least: they must accept the principle of universal secondary education as an essential for democracy; they must discover the immense variety of social needs and the individual capacities and wants for all the normal youth of America; they must discover, without regard to traditional practice, those materials which produce in youth the desired abilities, understandings, and attitudes; and they

must utilize those procedures which most surely and most economically produce the desired growth. Within this frame of reference of curriculum patterns, and within the broad concept of universal secondary education, we must educate the teacher.

In thinking of the teacher as one who fits into our concept of universal secondary education, we must conceive of an individual who possesses certain characteristics, knowledge, understanding, and skill. The teacher must possess the ability, health, and the personality to acquire these characteristics; and all institutions educating teachers should make certain that to the best of their knowledge these prospective teachers are able to become well-qualified and skillful teachers once the proper program of education is experienced.

There are certain characteristics which make up the innate nature of people which are valuable for teachers to possess, but there is no reason to believe that a teacher is born any more than any other professional worker is born. All of us are born with certain potentialities. These potentialities may be turned to many avenues of occupational competence, but they become valuable once they are directed toward specific professional goals. With these in the background of our thinking, let us analyze six characteristics of an effective secondary teacher.

THESE SHOULD BE YOUTH'S TEACHERS

The effective secondary teacher must be cognizant of the world in which he lives.

This is not a new idea, for much of our education has been devoted to a study of the world of the past and

present. We have stressed the necessity for understanding the historical development of our civilization and for becoming fully acquainted with the culture, the literature, and the philosophy of American life. However, it is not enough for the teacher to have a background of the culture. He must know also the issues that culture faces. He must know the practices characteristic of an American society living under the democratic principles. He must face the reality of change in those practices. He must have a thorough understanding of our basic system of values—the democratic theory—of the principles of government here and abroad, and of the place of government and the responsibilities individual citizens have toward it.

More than this, however, he should be well informed on the place of America in the world today. Too little training in our educational institutions has been devoted to the changing character and the future status of America. Too little time has been given to a knowledge of America in world affairs. Certainly the future of civilization depends to a large extent upon the leadership which America takes in the next generation. A teacher who is either uninterested or uninformed of the issues and problems in this field will devote his time and attention to those things he knows best and in which he possesses the greatest amount of training.

The teacher's education in this field should be based upon a general education program, aimed at studying him as a person and in his relation to the rest of the members of society as well as the principles and practices of the culture in which he lives, at developing indi-

vidual interests, at knowing the impact of science on social life, and at helping him find a place where he feels secure through a knowledge of his own environment as well as in the firm conviction that the place which he holds in that society is based upon his own integrity and dignity as well as his knowledge and skill.

In addition to this program of general education, he should develop some special interest where he is more competent than in other fields. At the same time he should continue to expand the breadth of his understanding and should develop the techniques and the methods by which he can keep growing in his understanding of the world and in cultural changes. No program of education is satisfactory unless it leaves the teacher, as well as other citizens, with a feeling that education has only begun as soon as he graduates, and that the continuation of his own education is the most important single pursuit of his life.

A teacher must possess an understanding of the nature of individuality.

In recent years educational literature has done much to stress the matter of needs. Some educators have described needs in terms of psychological needs, others in terms of social needs, and still others in terms of developmental needs. Whatever the process may be, it is less important than the discovery of why people are different, how they differ, what their needs are, and what are the processes of growth and development. Even today, far too little attention is given in school to understanding the needs of individuals.

Individuality is a common phenom-

enon, but teachers by and large fail miserably to understand the nature of individuality and what one does in the face of individual characteristics. It has been pointed out earlier that we cannot have uniformity and individuality at the same time. Teachers are too prone to attempt to seek uniformity in understanding or knowledge or skill among different individuals. We all face common problems; we react to them differently. We all believe in the basic principles of democratic living but we interpret their meaning in terms of our own framework of understanding and experience. We need general agreement on the basic framework of values. We need certain common understandings and certain basic skills, but we do not need to carry these uniform aspects of our educational program to the point where we likewise expect uniform interpretation, uniform thinking, uniform solutions, or uniform behavior.

If one understands the nature of individuality, he also understands the nature of the differences of human growth and development. Physical growth has been fairly well analyzed by the profession, and every teacher should be cognizant of the literature in this field. A great deal has also been done on psychological growth and development, and the teacher likewise needs to know the literature in this area. He needs to know the nature of learning and how people differ as they acquire new ideas. He needs to come to understand frustrations in the process of human behavior, but above all he needs to expect people to be different and to know what to do with these differences when he confronts them.

Any classroom teacher knows well

that no two pupils are alike. Any parent knows that his own children are not alike. Yet, in spite of this knowledge, we tend to undertake to treat individuals as if they were identical. The prospective teacher needs to give much attention to an understanding of human growth and development and the individual characteristics of this developmental process.

The teacher needs to possess an understanding of the social processes involved in society.

All people are social beings who are surrounded by social institutions, cultural mores, and restrictions of manners and morals constantly directing and guiding our behavior. War is an ever-present social process in the settling of differences; economic uncertainty is constantly facing all of us as well as the nations of the world. Our homes, our family life, our churches, are all contributing to the determination of our thinking and our behavioral characteristics. The ideals and principles of democracy itself are molding factors in human understanding. These are the social processes that affect the life of every individual. They have strong directing forces on the youth of our nation. And as youth meets his problems and comes to understand the social processes and the institutions that surround him, he reacts to them.

Much of our difficulty today develops from instability on the part of youth and adults in the face of these institutions and processes. If a youth reacts violently to the pressures of social living, he becomes anti-social. If he accepts them all without question and becomes resigned to their pressures, he becomes

either an ineffective citizen or an un-social individual. Both kinds, those who react violently and those who give complete acquiescence, face the problem of mental instability. The teacher must come to understand the effect of these forces on the human organism, the process by which one acquires and changes his attitudes toward them, the extent to which acceptance is necessary and the degree to which change can be brought about, the place of an individual—and of public opinion—in a society such as ours, and the processes which one goes through in order to regain stability once it has been lost.

Few teachers have opportunity to study these factors sufficiently in our present institutions of higher education. They become familiar with the structure of social institutions, to be sure, but not with the ways in which people and institutions react one upon the other and the extent to which the school is obligated to interpret and help the individual find his way among the pressures of living today. One of the most important things the teacher can learn is how to guide youth in the face of these social situations.

The teacher needs to develop an understanding of the process of controlled education.

We have established schools to control the process and the materials of education. In any educational process, purpose and goals are exceedingly important. One of the basic difficulties with a great deal of the so-called liberal or general education is that there is no purpose in it which is recognized and accepted by the learner. Until the pupil comes to accept on his own part an

understanding of the need, the utilization, or the reason for the effort necessary to acquire knowledge or skill or attitudes or changed behavior, he is not likely to be effective either in study or in improvement. Purposes and goals are frequently distant from pupils because there is not enough understanding of the relationship between the materials of instruction and the nature of individual needs. If the teacher comes to have a thorough knowledge of the needs of individuals and of the ways individuals react differently to social pressures, he will be in a better position to formulate for and with each individual the purposes and goals which should dominate his study.

The process of controlled education is a process of directing the learning of American youth. It is a process of changing behavior from one practice to another. Some of this is new practice in that the pupil has never learned how to meet a certain situation. Some of it involves changing behavioral experiences in that it is a matter of eliminating old practices and substituting new ones. Some of it is a matter of the continuity of growth and development in terms of increasing competence along certain behavioral patterns already established. The three are intricately interwoven. At no one time does the teacher do any one of the single processes alone, because human experience is such that new patterns, old ones, and continued ones are all developed together. The skillful teacher will recognize that the process of education, while it must be controlled, must be controlled by the artistry involved in dealing with individuals rather than the day-by-day assignment of responsibilities.

The secondary teacher must possess the artistry of a skilled technician.

Teaching is both an art and a science. It is a combination of a diagnostician and a practitioner. The knowledge which lies back of the teaching skill is not given to one at birth. There is a long, tedious process of learning to be faced, and skill is gained by understanding and practice with young people. We have overdone tremendously, in our educational programs for the training of teachers, the process of verbal education. We have relied too strongly upon knowledge, upon acquisition of ideas and information. Only when we attain more nearly the goals long ago set by the medical profession can we produce the kind of teachers we need.

In learning to become a teacher, one must spend long hours under the direction of those who are masters at the job of dealing with the growth and development of human beings. This is just as skillful a task as that laid upon any other profession. It does not come easily. It does not come with a few hours of practice teaching. It comes with long, ardent devotion to the clinical practice of working with youth. If our educational institutions are really serious about the job of educating teachers, they will devote far more time and attention than they now do to the skillful direction of the well-informed individual as he tries his hand at dealing with live human beings.

A really skillful teacher knows what the individual child needs. He knows what to do and when to do it. He has the tools and facilities with which to work; he has a small enough number of individuals in his class so that he can

effectively handle the problems they present. He has the support of those who are more skillful in certain specifics than he, so that he may be assisted by the specialist wherever such assistance is essential. He is a member of the team, all concentrating upon the maximum growth and development of youth. He is a general practitioner. As such, he will care for the majority of the needs of his students. He will recognize signs of instability and disease, and he will know when to call for help.

The teacher must know and be able to perform effectively in the process of social interpretation.

Education is a public function. It is supported by public funds. It depends upon a general belief in the process of education, upon confidence in those conducting the process, and upon a full recognition of the essential characteristics of a good school program. Education has changed mightily in the past two generations. We have been able to apply far more science and technical understanding to the process of education than ever before. Our educational institutions have conducted a great amount of research on the basic skills of reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, and related fields. We have also spent many hours in studying the nature of learning and the process of human growth and development. As a result of these scientific discoveries, education has improved in techniques and in the materials of instruction.

The general public does not yet know the nature of this research nor the ways in which it can be applied to the improvement of the educational process. Far too many parents received the no-

tion during the last twenty years that education was a process of "playing at school," a process of giving attention to art and games and music and rhythms and of neglecting the basic skills. Parents have felt that education was not doing for their children what the schools did for them. To an extent they have lost confidence in many teachers and have tended to malign the changes that have taken place in the educational program. All of this has been done not deliberately to discredit the schools but out of misunderstanding and ignorance of educational change based upon scientific research.

If education is to continue to enjoy increasing support of the state, the federal government, and the local communities, teachers must become more skillful interpreters of the process of education to the public. The pupil himself is the finest instrument of public relations which the school has. Therefore, it behooves each teacher to see that the story which is carried home from school is one which is complementary to the educational process. The pupil's story should reveal to his parents that education is geared to his needs, that it is achieving the goals which he deems important, that the teacher is an artist and is skillful at his job, that the program of the school is satisfying. This does not mean that education should cater to the whims of youth. It does mean that the educational program must be sound in that it meets the needs of youth and that the teacher must see that all youth have an effective program.

In addition to having a good story for the home, the teacher has an excellent opportunity, as she practices the

functions of community leadership and assumes her place as a citizen of the community, to help parents and citizens at large to understand the important changes that have taken place in education. We know full well that youth learn more rapidly when they feel a part in the learning process and feel that it is achieving desired goals for them. We know, also, that pupils are more likely to put forth energy for this kind of an educational program. We are fully aware of the fact that once this kind of a program is put into operation, pupils retain their learning better than if they have less interest in what goes on in the school. Some people call it progressive education. It is not progressive in any sense of the word which carries unfavorable connotations. It is intelligent education in terms of the findings of research.

This education must be made clear to parents. They must understand why pupils should become more of a part of the educational process. They must know why we have changed our methods of teaching reading, arithmetic, and spelling. They must know why education should be geared to the various stages of individual growth and development. They must know why all pupils should not learn the same

things at the same time. By and large we do an ineffective job in interpreting our own profession to the public, and as long as we expect to share to as large an extent as we do in public taxation, our relations with parents in terms of educational understanding must be good. Teachers in the process of education should learn how to take the complicated research language of the educator and turn it into the simple explanations required by the non-technical layman.

MARKED CHANGE IS INDICATED

Such essentials in the education of teachers for secondary schools concerned with making education universal for all youth imply a program quite different from the conventional one practiced in most of the educational institutions of America today. If such a program were put into practice it would require many changes in the curriculum of our colleges and universities; but, above all, it would require marked changes in the professional education of our teachers.

Before this can come about, however, we must change the attitude and understanding of those responsible for educating teachers. This is the immediate task before us.



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