AT PRESENT there are a number of encouraging signs that distinct progress is being made in the field of parent education. Recent conferences and workshops, good materials for parents, and publications dealing with parent-school cooperation support this view.

The trend toward closer working relationships is the more desirable because it is long overdue. Educators have recognized for years that home and school should be a natural working unit if the growth and development of children is to proceed as favorably as possible. At the same time there has been too little well-organized effort on the part of the profession to move toward this widely recognized need for closer cooperation.

The Importance of Cooperation

A number of elements serve to emphasize the growing importance of parent education and closer cooperation with parent groups. The changing patterns of American family life have created problems with which it is difficult for parents to cope. Mothers and fathers often are weary at the end of the day when there is a moment for the family to be together. Children no longer are economic assets and, as one consequence, have difficulty in finding the sense of responsibility and belonging which were commonly present in family living a few generations ago.


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schools' public relations, active parent participation affords a means of interpreting the work of the schools which should not be overlooked.

Some Recent Progress

During the present year there has been encouraging evidence of activity in parent education. Conferences and workshops concerned with parent education have been held in nearly all parts of the country during the current year. A sampling of these experiences is given in subsequent paragraphs.

At each of the 1949 meetings of the American Association of School Administrators a major program devoted to parent education was featured. Discussion and planning was carried forward in San Francisco, St. Louis, and Philadelphia.

The July, 1949, conference for administrators, sponsored jointly by the University of Chicago and Northwestern University, was planned so as to give an entire day to the topic, "Administrators and Parents Work for Improved Educational Opportunities for Teachers and Children." William Alexander, superintendent of the Winnetka, Illinois, schools and Mrs. J. J. Garland, vice-president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, made major addresses during the morning. Afternoon discussion groups dealt with practical problems of home-school relations.

A July workshop was held at Indiana University in Bloomington and brought together parents, teachers, and administrators with a common interest in improving the cooperative efforts of all three.

In August a three-week workshop was held on the campus of Northwestern University. Experiences were planned so that the participants learned ways in which local action could be initiated both to stimulate parents' participation in the work of the school and to further their education. E. T. McSwain served as coordinator and Herold C. Hunt, Chicago's general superintendent of schools, Ernest Osborne of Teachers College, Columbia University, and Arthur Rice of The Nation's Schools were among the dozen participating consultants. Mesdames C. C. Clark and A. J. Nicely served as consultants from the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

At the state level the Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers has been demonstrating what can be done to develop local leadership. A program begun three years ago under the direction of Ethel Kawin of the University of Chicago staff has expanded to six population centers in Illinois: Chicago, Champaign, Urbana, Moline, Springfield, and Carbondale. Cooperating institutions include the University of Illinois and Southern Illinois University. Several hundred local leaders have been trained and a publications program has been launched. During 1949 packet material for parent leaders was prepared for use in discussion and study groups at the pre-school, elementary, and adolescent levels.

The activities mentioned above indicate that both parents and the profession seem to be recognizing more actively that parents are one of the greatest resources available both for insuring growing support for public education and in improving the curriculum.

Be Sure to Read...

Several recent publications mentioned here should prove of interest to educators in the growing group endeavor to make parent education a more vital part of the public school program.

FROM THE N. Y. TIMES. Not even the busiest person will be wasting his time in reading the 1949 edition of Catherine Mackenzie's Parent and Child. (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1949. 341 pp.) The book contains carefully selected writings from Miss Mackenzie's column in the Sunday magazine section of the New York Times and has great appeal for anyone living and working with children. Fluent style and uncommon good sense are brought to bear on various levels.
of child development from infancy through adolescence in the first six chapters. Interesting section headings such as “Tired, Sleepy Fathers” and “The Young Grandma” abound in the book. Chapters on such topics as discipline and delinquency conclude this authentic volume.

PARENT EDUCATION. Particularly useful for parents and the beginning student of child development is These Are Your Children by Gladys G. Jenkins, Helen Shacter, and William W. Bauer. (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1949. 192 pp.) The authors have backgrounds in family service, psychology, and medicine, respectively, and their writing is illustrated by one of the most delightful collections of children’s photographs to be found in any recent professional publication. Sprightly chapter headings such as “Five Is a Comfortable Age” introduce a well-prepared text which provides accurate information in a highly readable style. The book should help appreciably to meet the need for readings in connection with parent education and child study groups.

BACKGROUND OF FAMILY LIFE. Carle C. Zimmerman’s Family of Tomorrow (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949. 256 pp.) brings the reader excellent background information on the family. The author shows unusual skill in combining interesting, well-documented information and a quality of readability which make it difficult to leave the text until the last page has been read. The intellectually curious will be stimulated by the way Zimmerman traces the influence of nine personages who, over a 2000-year period, have shaped Western civilization’s family system: Augustus and his wife Livia, Theodora, the prostitute who became Justinian’s Empress, Erasmus, St. Augustine, Luther, and John Milton among them. The volume provides a fine foundation for developing insight into parent education, broadly conceived.

A NEW OLSON BOOK. The simple title of Willard Olson’s Child Development (New York: D. C. Heath and Company, 1949. 417 pp.) introduces an important addition to the literature. The carefully documented text Olson has prepared will be of value to serious-minded parents and students of a wide range of maturity. It is organized in terms of research areas including the child’s growth and development, his classroom and community role, affective life, and school achievement.

And Don’t Miss . . .


ILLUSTRATED PRINCIPLES. Many readers have awaited a book like Harold Spears’ recent Some Principles of Teaching. (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1949. 147 pp.) He has selected 89 principles for comment under such headings as “The School’s Purposes,” “The Learning Process,” and “The Individual Pupil.” Each principle is explored briefly and with a refreshing lack of pedagogy. Spears’ familiar cartoons enliven the text.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY. A useful addition to the literature is Edward G. Olsen’s recent compilation with the descriptive title, School and Community Programs. (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1949. 510 pp.) It is, perhaps, the most extensive and satisfying collection to date of ways in which schools can “function to improve the quality of human living.”

INTERGROUP EDUCATION. For the interculturally and world-minded educator, new publications on the market include: The Educational Policies Commission’s American Education and Interna-
national Tensions presents "lines of strategy for American education" in a period of ideological conflict. Leonard Kenworthy's bibliography, Free and Inexpensive Materials on World Affairs for Teachers (New York: International House, 500 Riverside Drive, 1949, 100 pp.) is one of the best yet, and conveniently organized for use. Within the last few months the "Freedom Pamphlet" series (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 212 Fifth Avenue) has grown to ten titles, either available or in press, and considers civil rights, intercultural relations, UNESCO, and similar topics of current importance. Edward J. Sparling, William H. Kilpatrick, and Gordon W. Allport are among the contributors.

NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN. You and Atomic Energy (Chicago: Childrens Press, Inc., 1949. Unpaged.) is a primer on atomic energy for use with children in grades five-eight. Some of the illustrations are misleading (e.g., personification of atoms) and there are a few errors in facts. But the book is of some value because of the limited material on atomic energy available for use with children.

For the younger child, two imaginative little volumes, I'll Show You How It Happens and If You Could See Inside, (New York: Chanticleer Press, 1949) help the young reader to "see the unseen" through attractive pictures and simple prose. Cut-away drawings depict the insides of volcanoes, lighthouses, houses, coal mines, and wasps' nests in the latter book. The former touches on steam engines, insect life-cycles, seed migration, eclipse, and similar items of interest to most children. The drawings seem superior to both the text and the binding.

Mary Reely's Seamites (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1949. 237 pp.) merits mention because the narrative is simply written so that children who do not read well in the intermediate grades can follow it, yet it has a plot sufficiently mature for many ten- to twelve-year-olds. There are too few books that meet these specifications. The author writes of her own experiences as a child and captures an authentic flavor of times past.